

**The Dual Methods of Motif-extraction:  
Creating a method for researching textual motifs and  
mythological entities in the Science of Religion**



**By**

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## Abstract

In the textual stories of polytheistic religion we see patterns of character traits, images and situations that seem to repeat themselves across the barriers of time and space. In search of these patterns one could wish for a method for collecting and comparing these small units of comparison. It is my belief that these smaller units of comparative textual imagery is found within the folkloristic term *motif*. With the aid of a joining of two sciences, that of folkloristics and religious studies, into a cohesive understanding of the term *Motif*, I will attempt to create a new method for categorization, cataloguing and comparison when dealing with gods, monsters and other characters found in the stories of mythology in general and the Norse mythology in particular. The point of this master thesis being to create a manual for further research into mythological studies with the aid of a specialized practical method built upon a solid theoretical framework. This will be accomplished in this thesis in two parts, the one being the scientific basis for the method and the terms used, the other part being a point by point description of the method as it is used on a corpus of Norse texts. This method will, at its most basic form, be implemented into a computer system to further its use as a comparative tool.



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## **Part 1:**

### **1.1 Introduction**

When a student of the science of religion is reading one of the many stories from the polytheistic religions of the world, the student can't avoid to see some patterns emerging among the gods, heroes and monsters that populate the different stories. Thor is described as having a red beard, and killing the sometimes monstrous enemies of the Norse gods, while the Mesopotamian hero Gilgamesh and the biblical King David shared his red hair and skills where the slaying of monsters were concerned. Another case is the Norse god Odin becoming an eagle to steal the mead of poetry, while Zeus takes the form to kidnap the young prince Ganymede. One cannot help but wonder about these patterns and recurring characteristics and traits that seem to show themselves time and time again.

The question that arises when viewing these patterns is a very logical one: Does there exist a collection of these patterns? And if it does, is there a way for us to compare them to one another and the characters that exhibit them to each other?

The answer to this question does seem to be no, although many have compared these traits and patterns to each other, several of which will follow in this thesis, they have done this without creating a cataloguing framework to work from, and without a distinct collection process based upon a specialized method. I believe that in lieu of the absence of a specialized process, one can be made to accommodate the comparison of religious patterns and characteristics, but we must begin from a new vantage point when dealing with this problem. I believe that the roots of the process which we seek can be found within the science of folklore, and in the concept of *Motifs*. I will from the term motif, as it is used in folkloristics, attempt to create both a new terminology influenced by comparative mythologists, and a dual specialized method for extracting and comparing these motifs.

### 1.1.2: The aim of this Master Thesis

The very essence of this master thesis is to find a new and effective entry point in the process of comparing the religious motifs and entities of the religious texts. Therefore this thesis is to be read as a manual for further research with a practical method built upon a theoretical framework of folkloristics and the science of religion. This is certainly a huge undertaking, which must be approached gradually and in increments. Therefore this master thesis will have a threefold focus, all of which will in the end hopefully validate my dual methods of using a motif indexing process to compare religious figures, stories and universes with each other as a useful way to compare the finer details between different mythological landscapes themselves and at a later date maybe also popular culture, and to give a new perspective on the different questions that exist within the field of the history of religion and comparative religion.

In the first part of the thesis I will give some introductory remarks about my choice of corpus and a brief outline of the stories. I will also argue for the choice of a polytheistic religion as a basis for a motif extraction exercise, and specifically why I believe the Norse mythology to be especially relevant. In addition to this I will describe some specific problems which can be dealt with outside of the problems specific to each of the two motif extraction methods. I will in this part also describe the platform which I have been as fortunate to be able to use for my work, the Bibliotheca Polyglotta project.

In the second half of the first part I am going to describe the roots of the science of motifs as it has evolved within the framework of folklore science, with a varied selection made from a historical context to further illuminate the method used by Aarne Antti and Stith Thompson. The other part of this section of the thesis will be used to describe comparative mythological methods and theories from other sciences, to further validate the thought of motifs and archetypes as valid focal points of comparison. The scholars referenced and discussed in this part are: George Dumézil, Carl Jung, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Mircea Eliade.

In the second part I will give a detailed account of the methods I have devised to extract and use motifs as a basis for comparison. I will describe both the “near textual approach to motif extraction” and the “interpretational approach to motif extraction”. The methods will be shown both by highlighting each part of their structure, goals, strengths and weaknesses, in addition to each method being followed by an example of a text in which the method is used.

The third part of the thesis will be a conclusion of the methods validity, in addition to making some arguments about the methods viability in the context of a larger project that aims to go beyond the borders of religious literature.

### 1.1.3: The relations between the history of religion and folkloristics

As the focus of this thesis is to create a method that in essence is the coming together of terms and ideas from the science of folklore into the study of the history of religion, it is prudent to look at the relationship between the two disciplines historically. Although the two sciences have evolved separately for many years, they are, as all humanities, closely related. One could argue that they spring from the same source, a body of theories and ideas that they share. To illustrate this we could look to two theorists who revolutionized their respective fields, Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831-1880) and James George Frazer (1854-1941). Wilhelm Mannhardt was a German scholar who is seen as one of the important figures in the earliest stages of folkloristic science. Mannhardt had religion as his focus, but he devoted much of his life to field work and to, in J.G. Frazer's words, collect thousands of "popular superstitions and customs of the peasantry" (Ackerman 1975: 121). Because of this systematic collection of he was lauded as one of the most important figures in the study of folk traditions and mythology, his work even including sending out printed questionnaires in Germany and Scandinavian countries (von Sydow 1934: 291). This study of the folklore and traditions of the Germanic peoples were at its heart an endeavor in the search of answers to questions regarding the history of religion. Frazer wrote that the work done by Mannhardt was first and foremost done with the intention of finding "the fullest and most trustworthy evidence we possess as to the primitive religion of the Aryans" (Ackerman 1975: 121). Mannhardt created many theories that were born from this work, including theories regarding animism and forest spirits found in his work "Wald- und Feldkulte" (von Sydow 1934 293-294), and of the mirroring of nature in the human psyche by way of metaphors (Braarvig 2000: 139-140).

James George Frazer is seen as perhaps the most important figure in the beginnings of comparative mythology, and he owed much to the works of Wilhelm Mannhardt. Frazer's well known magnum opus *the Golden Bough* which was first published in 1890, and it expanded upon and made famous the theories found in Mannhardts earlier work. The Golden Bough concerns itself with a myriad of different religious topics and made now famous religious terms and images like the divine king, the dying and reviving god and theories about religious magic well known (Ackerman 1975: 115). It is however not the point of this

exercise to fully map the theories of Mannhardt or Frazer, but to show that the theories and observations they made are born from the same patterns of thought and body of knowledge. Although folkloristics and the history of religion and comparative religion have evolved in different directions, the commonalities of theory shared by Mannhardt and Frazer does illustrate the link between the two disciplines, and sows the seed of the idea of the two coming together again in a new approach to comparative mythology.

#### 1.1.4: Connections to other terms/sciences:

As there are a few connections of note that are somewhat apart from the analytical portion and the description of corpus, these can be addressed at this point in the introduction. These are brief glances at the philosophical and psychological term “conceptual science”, and an introduction into the Digital Humanities, since this thesis will have a digital aspect in the form of a web-based database. This addition is to show the ties that this thesis will have to these aspects of modern science.

##### 1.1.4.1: Connections to Conceptual science

The motifs and patterns we find in the religious literature are all a part of an overarching scientific thought, what we know as conceptual science. As a scientific term it is natural to make the connections to the term Motif that we are trying to redefine and use in this thesis. The term *Concept* is a powerful word that embodies much scholarly thought and interpretation, but at its core it is a *mental representation* (Thagard 1990: 258). The human mind does see, create and think in mental images and concepts, which in turn makes us able to make a more effective use of the human thinking process by means of associations (Fodor 1995: 3). The concept is a representation of a mental or abstract entity that is built upon the foundation of several mental/abstract ideas, and that is what makes it such an effective tool to use. As an example we can use the concept Dog, which is an abstraction of all dogs, and of all the things that makes a dog a dog. The individual dog does not however conform to the mental abstraction of a dog, but exhibits enough “dog-ness” to fit into the conceptualized mental representation. As we can see this thought goes against the classical line of thought which sees concepts as definitions, and that there are different conditions for the aptness of applying the term “concept” in the face of the word “definition” (1995: 12). The somewhat vague nature of concepts do not however detract from their usage by the human mind, both

conscious and unconscious. If we were to see some of the uses of concepts we can look to a ten point list of some of the roles of concepts, made by Paul Thagard when dealing with the sentence "Gracy is a whale":

"(1) Categorization. Our concept whale enables us to recognize things as whales. (2) Learning. Our concept whale must be capable of being learned, perhaps from examples, or perhaps by combining other existing concepts. (3) Memory. Our concept whale should help us remember things about whales, either in general or from particular episodes that concern whales. (4) Deductive inference. Our concept whale should enable us to make deductive and inductive inferences about whales, for example, enabling us to infer that since Gracy is a whale, she has fins. (5) Explanation. Our knowledge about whales should enable us to generate explanations, for example saying that Gracy swims because she is a whale. (6) Problem solving. Our knowledge about whales should enable us to solve problems, for example, how can we get an errant whale out of the harbor. (7) Generalization. Our concept whale should enable us to learn new facts about whales from additional examples, for example, to form new general conclusions such as that whales have blubber under their skin. (8) Analogical inference. Our concept whale should help us to reason using similarities: if you know that dolphins are quite intelligent and are aquatic mammals like whales, then perhaps whales are intelligent too. Metaphor should also be supportable by the concept, as when we say that an overweight person is a whale. (9) Language comprehension. Our understanding of sentences such as 'Gracy is a whale' depends on our knowing something about the concept whale. (10) Language production. We need to be able to utter sentences like 'Gracy is a whale' and 'Whales are less friendly than dolphins'. (1990: 259).

As we can see the usage of concepts, even in a general sense, is a complex and effective tool. As we can see a concept embodies many of the aspects which we associate to the word which symbolizes the amount of words that constitute the concept. The discussions around the concepts and what, if anything, they actually constitute are numerous. We shall however not delve into the philosophical or psychological discussions that surround what a concept embodies, as our focus is to be on religious literary figures. We should however be aware of the ties to the conceptual sciences, as the entities and motifs to a large degree can be seen as parallel to these. It is my belief that the motifs, as I present the term in this thesis to a large degree, can be connected to the conceptual sciences through the fact that they constitute the same thought; the thought that the associational value of the concept/motif gives it a larger body of information than the simple word that constitutes it form in the medium of text. The entities and the motifs that constitutes can be seen as being in somewhat of a reversal of the concept situation, as the entities are *constructed* from the motifs, and that the associations made are put into that entity on purpose.

There is also a point to be made when comparing the thought of concepts to the science of metaphors in religion. Many have made the point of reading a religious entity as a

metaphor for a natural or social phenomenon, this point will be discussed more thoroughly later in the thesis.

#### 1.1.4.2: The Digital Humanities

Another point to make about this thesis is that it is to have a digital aspect as well as the written part. The project proposed by me of motif extraction and comparison, although in its infancy, is now accessible through the *Bibliotheca Polyglotta* project on the University of Oslo Webpages. The point of this is to connect the project to what is called “the Digital Humanities” by some, which is the implementation of the humanities into the medium of computers. The implementation and usage of digital texts and tools makes it easier to discover, collect and organize the findings, in addition to making it easy for others to access one’s finds. The Digital Humanities are driven forth by projects like the DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for the Arts and Humanities) whose goal can be defined as this:

“The aim of DARIAH is to enhance and support digitally enabled research across the humanities and arts, to enable researchers to ask new research questions and for old questions to be explored in new ways, and to access, link and use the rapidly increasing volume of digitized source materials provided by libraries, archives, museums and research institutes. The DARIAH infrastructure includes systems, tools and technologies, the sharing of knowledge and expertise and education in methods and the use of digital data, tools and infrastructure.” (Anderson 2010: 3780-3781)

With this in mind I can point to the digital part of my own project, which will make it able to share the content of my research with others, and make an easily accessible platform for further research. The use of computers for the searching and compiling of data, as well as a platform for cooperation is a huge leap forward in the development of effective methods in the humanities. With the potential project spawned from my own project being comprised of a huge amount of data, the use of digital tools is not only practical, but almost an absolute necessity. The digital tools such as the xml-format, the command system known as Regex, are all important in the shaping and implementation of this project digitally, where it can get the largest impact.

### 1.1.5: The Bibliotheca Polyglotta

As I mentioned in the last part of the introduction I have been very fortunate to be allowed and encouraged to use the project *Bibliotheca Polyglotta*. The project is spearheaded by Professor Jens Braarvig at the University of Oslo, and I have been allowed to be given a section of the project as a platform for showing the near-textual approach to motif extraction and the Motif Library of Norse Mythology (MLNM). This Bibliotheca Polyglotta is a collection of religious texts in different translations on the University of Oslo website implemented, with the ability to search within the texts. As it is described in the description of the project, and its scope and aims:

“The **Bibliotheca Polyglotta** (BP) is a multilingual corpus of historically important texts. As such it is a resource to access the global history of concepts as displayed in a number of languages, and it demonstrates how concepts diffuse historically into new languages, and thus into new cultural contexts.” ([www.hf.uio.no](http://www.hf.uio.no), )

The collection of libraries in the BP are as follows:

- The **Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae** (TLB) contains a number of Buddhist multilingual texts (Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, English, etc.). The TLB was the first library to be established under the project;
- **Biblia** contains the Biblical Books of the *Old Testament* in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, English, and the complete *New Testament* in Greek, Latin, English, etc. More versions will be added with time;
- **Arabic Texts** contains a multilingual *Quran*, so far in Arabic, English and Chinese, but Latin, Urdu, etc., are planned;
- The **Bibliotheca Polyglotta Graeca** (BPG) contains the Greek literature of antiquity. So far it contains the *Categories* of Aristotle in Greek, Latin, Arabic, English, and Althochdeutsch, as well as *Analytica Posteriora*, *Euclid* and the *Hippocratic Oath*. The *Timaeus* of Plato is under its way with input of Greek, Latin (Cicero, Calchidius and Ficino), English, and German, also under development are the multilingual *Hermeneutics*, *Prior Analytics*, *Rhetorics* and more. The *Mystical Theology* (Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, English) of Dionysius Areopagita is in place in the BPG;
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR) is integrated as a distinct library, planned also to contain more resources on this document;
- **The Multilingual Ibsen** (MI) makes available the numerous translations made of Henrik Ibsen's plays;
- **Sanskrit-Persica** will contain literature translated from Sanskrit into Persian, and from Persian into other languages.

In addition to these there is a new library by the name of “Motif Library of Norse Mythology”, which is, as its name implies, indeed connected to this master thesis. In this library I have been able to insert my literary corpus of Norse texts in a simple and efficient manner, which has made the process of applying the methodology very easy.

The process of the near textual approach is already present in the library “Motif Library of Norse Mythology” or “MLNM”. Here we can see the process of using the search function inherent in the Polyglotta-system making it possible to compare the entities of Norse mythology with basis in the motifs.

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## Part 1.2

### The new definition of the term Motif

#### 1.2.1 The scientific background

In this part of the thesis I will try to expand upon the scientific background for the motif extraction method I have devised for use on religious entities. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis the most important inspiration in regards to the idea of extracting motifs and using these smaller units as a basis for comparison between entities, was the Aarne-Thompson classification system, and especially the Stith Thompson *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. The idea of the extraction and use of an isolated narrative element, namely *the motif*, was born from reading *the Folktale* by Stith Thompson. In this part of the thesis I will expand upon the theory, usage and definitions of motifs through the folkloristic sciences. I will accomplish this by briefly touching upon what I believe to be key moments in the evolution of the term, culminating with the usage of the term in the *motif-index of Folk-Literature*. This is however only part of the scientific background I wish to establish behind my definition and usage of the motif as a comparative unit, the other part being the scientific material behind the field of comparative mythology. This will be illustrated by a look into the works of George Dumézil, Carl Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and their respective theories that could impact our definition and usage of the term motif.

#### **1.2.2: A brief history of the research of motifs in folklore, from the beginning to the Wagnerian “Leitmotiv” and further to the Arne-Thompson motif index**

Folklore studies have time and time again been faced with the same questions as I have mentioned in my introduction to this paper. Why are there so many similarities between stories that are so far removed from each other both in time and space? How many individual elements must match before one could realistically make an argument about the relation between two texts? To answer these questions the field of folklore studies, like most sciences, has tried to create the necessary means and tools of interpretation and classification to undertake such a monumental task. Out of this environment and these questions the Arne-

Thompson motif index was born. The thought that every story is made up of a chains and/or clusters of motifs which the scholars could classify and compare in stories of different cultures across space and time was central to the making and shaping of the index. In this part of the thesis the goal is to give a rough summary of the thoughts and science that led up to the motif index which I myself have based much of my own thoughts and work upon. The Arne-Thompson index of motifs was by and large the first and most massive attempt at trying to catalogue the different motifs found in international folktales. To further familiarize the reader with this, the most central term used in this paper, it's only natural to try to do a rough sketch of the evolution of the term motif in folklorist studies. In this chapter I will try to mention the most important historical figures, which in their efforts within their respective fields have been instrumental in the evolution and "crystallization" of what we today now as motifs in folklore studies. A natural place to start would be the German Romantic movement, then a brief summary of the thoughts of German composer Richard Wagner about the usage of his own term "Leitmotiv" and "Hauptmotiv", and finally making the effort of trying to draw the lines from these early scholars to the Arne-Thompson Index of Motifs we know today. Naturally I will also mention some of the criticism that has been leveled at the index, which I myself must take in to account during my work with the modified version of the indexing of motifs.

Again it's natural to take a look at Stith Thompson's definition of the term "motif", which he defines in his work "The Folktale":

«A motif is the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition. In order to have this power it must have something unusual and striking about it. Most motifs fall into the classes. First are the actors in a tale - gods, or the unusual animals, or the marvelous creatures like witches, ogres, or fairies, or even conventionalized human characters like the favorite youngest child or the cruel stepmother. Second come certain items in the background of the action - magic objects, unusual customs, strange beliefs, and the like. In the third place there are single incidents - and these comprise the great majority of motifs.»  
(Thompson 1946: 416).

This is the definition against which I will compare the earlier thoughts of the term motif. It is a simple definition, of which I will make my own adjustments to, in time, to further facilitate its use in the science of religion. It is for all intents and purposes a very simple definition, a natural consequence of Thompson's research being completely dependent upon the term being simple and codified as to be used effectively as a tool to interpret international folklore.

### 1.2.2.1: The German Romantic movement

The thing that any student of folklore or motifs must understand is that the history and development of the science of motifs in no way is a straight line from a simple basic thought to a more complex system of classification. It would be more apt to look at the development as chaotic, and as something that is more akin to trying to unify and collect different lines of thought and methods of interpretation that existed both in the field of folkloristic studies and outside of it, and trying to make them into a cohesive whole. In its infancy the term was used in its most general sense, often as a vague term that means different things to different people, until the term itself is developed under other names before it is all made one by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson.

Some of the earliest uses of the term “motif”, where we could discern some semblance to the roots of the modern usage, can be found in the writings of the German Romanticists. As one could reasonably expect the term has undergone an extensive metamorphosis from its early usage, as is evident in its form among the romanticists. Johann Paul Richter (1763-1825) described motifs as literary and psychological factors that in some way made the plot of a story or a novel move forwards, one could say that in its earliest form the term was used as a synonym for “motivational factors”. Johanne August Eberhard (1739-1809) did use a somewhat similar definition of the term, but he did draw a line between what he called “elements” of a story and the “motives” of a story. If one were to follow Eberhard’s reasoning it would become clear that he defined the motifs as representations of the dynamics between the elements of a story, in other words the action and consequence, or the cause and effect (Newall 1980: 20).

The next important part of the terms history among the German romanticists, and an important stepping stone in the term becoming a less vague word, is the correspondence and cooperative works of Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). In the works of Goethe and Schiller the word “motif” was used primarily as a function, and it was defined based on how it affected the plot of a story, novel or theatrical play. This is of course a throwback to the usage we saw among the earlier German romanticists, but Goethe and Schiller went further in their definition of the word and its functions. According to Goethe and Schiller it was possible to divide motifs into three different categories:

- 1: Progressive, which advance the plot
- 2: Retrogressive, which draw the plot away from its goal
- 3: Retarding, which delay the progress of the plot

4: Retrospective, which introduce into the poem events which happened before the time of the current action

5: Prospective, which anticipate what will happen after the time of the current action (1980: 20)

This is somewhat closer to the current definition of motifs, but it's still a way off. As we can deduce the definition is still mainly a functional one. Although if one scrutinizes and interpret some of the correspondences between Goethe and Schiller one can make the argument that Goethe at times would use certain phrases that seemed to indicate him viewing motifs as somewhat of an "abstract idea" or as a description of a poetic or literary situation (Newall 1980: 21).

#### 1.2.2.2: Richard Wagner "Leitmotiv"

A natural step in the continuation of the history of motifs in folkloristic science is to look at the enormously influential German composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883), and his works of musical art. Even though the term "Leitmotiv", which one could translate as "leading motif", was as a rule seldom or never used by Wagner it is the term that is most frequently used when one talks about his work. If one were to seek a definition of the term, a good place to start is in Michael Kennedy's *"The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music"* of 1989:

A term (often misspelt *leitmotif*) invented (1871) by F. W. Jähns, the expert on Weber, to describe a short constantly recurring mus. phrase or theme used to denote a person, thing, or abstract idea. 'Representative theme' is a good Eng. alternative. Composers throughout history have used the device in one form or another, e.g. Gluck and Mozart, Weber in *Der Freischütz*, Mendelssohn, Berlioz (the *idée fixe* in the *Symphonie Fantastique*), but it was raised to its highest and most complex form by Wagner, especially in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, where the subtle combinations of *leitmotiv* create symphonic textures. Wagner used the term *Hauptmotiv* in 1867. (Kennedy 1989: 579)

One can see from this definition that the term *leitmotiv* is closer to the usage found in Stith Thompson's folkloristic work. Wagner used his leitmotifs primarily as symbolic representations of his characters, their moods and the situations they found themselves in; this is especially prevalent in his work "Der Ring des Nibelungen". Richard Wagner did take a literary term and evolved it into a massively successful way of projecting enormous amounts of mood, characterization and dramatic situations through relatively simple means. The ability

to create associations, to create what one might call *Points of Orientation*, is an effective way to convey massive dramatic situations (Furness 1982: 17).

Contrasting with the usage of the term motif among the German Romanticists, this was a whole new way to look at motifs, and to cleverly use them specifically as a means to an end. In my opinion this indicates that Wagner had a more keen insight into the nature of motifs, and their potential role as instruments and tools to convey a message than many of his contemporaries.

### 1.2.2.3: Scherer and Dilthey

While one would like to see that the major strides in the science of motifs could be a bit more varied, one cannot escape the fact that once again the location is Germany. The works of the esteemed scholars Wilhelm Scherer (1841-1886) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) were instrumental in the evolution of the term, and they both made significant strides within their field, although with different approaches.

Wilhelm Scherer's approach to motifs was by and large guided by his ultimate goal of his studies and work. Scherer was trying to establish an image of a nation's character as it appeared in languages, and hoped to achieve this by purely empirical means like studying traditional culture, history and religious factors (Newall 1980: 22). To be able to achieve this Scherer would have to be able to trace elements and motifs back to their sources, those sources being either the spirit of the nation in question or if it has an external origin. With this in mind it became essential in the works of Scherer to be able to find and use motifs as tangible definable objects of study, and as a consequence of that fact Scherer was forced to create the defining characteristics of these motifs. Scherer's motifs were ideas, themes and subjects, which here is used as an abstract within literature. Furthermore he defined motifs as occurring primarily through the relation between character and action. He made a distinction between primary- (Hauptmotive) and secondary motifs (Nebenmotiven), and made a rough version of a classification system based on motifs and their relation to each other (1980: 23). One can interpret Scherer's view of motifs as seeing them as indications of social and cultural trends within a given society, and that finding these motifs would yield a greater insight and understanding of a society, as it is portrayed as culture in literature, meaning that literary works represent sociocultural changes by their textual and symbolic content.

Wilhelm Dilthey however was of a completely different view regarding motifs. An important note to make is Dilthey and his complete break with the traditional ways of looking at things more akin to the way natural sciences do, and the fact that Dilthey to a greater degree

viewed literature and poetry as expressions of psychology and social Darwinism. Dilthey shunned the empirical approach of Scherer and decided to view the science of humanity and culture “on its own terms” (1980: 24). Dilthey used the term *Lebensvärheltnis*, translated most often as “a situation of life”, and argued that motifs were “situations of life made art”. In other words that a motif is a situation of life that is transformed artistically through the writer/artist, and that carries with it the artist’s ability to express the innate moods and feelings that situation of life contains. In Dilthey’s writings the motifs always seem to work together to achieve an overarching “poetic goal” in the story, a dominating motivation. By creating a definition of the motif as a psychological aspect of artistic creativity, and as an element in literary works where they are understood in relation to other motifs, Dilthey in essence created the motif as a term that transcends the boundaries of time and space, and laid the foundation for a scientific comparative study of motifs (1980: 25).

#### 1.2.2.4: Vladimir Propp and the Morphology of the Folktale

The Russian researcher Vladimir Propp is an important character to note in the field of folklore studies, into which he took his great empiricist mind and created a list of 31 functions, and 7 characters described as “spheres of action” to illustrate the formal structure of the Russian folktale. He did not however work directly in the field of motifs, as he did not use that direct term. What he did do however, was to use a system of collecting smaller narrative units and compare tales on the basis of them, in an attempt to formalize a universal morphology of folktales. The 31 functions were described by Propp as “*Functions of Dramatis Personae*”, and used these as generic units, which could come in many varieties, into which he divided the structure of the folktale (Propp 1968: 25). If we are to go into some of the 31 functions which constitute the folktale in Propps writings we could collect and view the first five functions from his list, as the entirety of the list presented in this thesis would be to arduous a task when compared to the results. The first function of Propp is “*One of the members of a family absents himself from home*”, which comes in the varieties of the person leaving being from the older generation, the function being intensified by death of parents, or a member/members of the younger generation absent themselves (1968: 26). We can see here an overarching structure of the function which Propp argued was a universal dramatic function, with the smaller categories of variation. The second function is defined as “*an interdiction addressed to the hero*”, which entails a suggestion or challenge, made against the hero which sets up a conflict, examples may be that the hero is told to stay away from something or to not perform an action during a specific situation (1968: 26).

The third function that follows this is the “*violation of the interdiction*”, which is a pairing with the second function in which the first interdiction is acted upon in a manner that is in conflict with the intent by the one that voiced the interdiction. In this function the villain(s) enter the story (1968: 27). The fourth is “*The Villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance*”, while the fifth is “*The Villain receives information about his victim*”. As we can see these categories of functions can be wide and encompass several different variations, but they are still very bound to a specific structure.

Vladimir Propp described the seven “spheres of action”, he devised a system of connecting the functions in the story to special classes of dramatis personae in each story (1968: 79). These characters take the shape of archetypes since they are the connection points for generalized and universal functions. The seven spheres are: the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess, the dispatcher, the hero and the false hero (1968: 79-80). These are archetypes into which we could group different characters from different folktales. As such we could see these as comparative units.

With the writings of prop we see a way of creating archetypal character types and functions in a story, which we then could apply to the story in question. As we can see this does correspond to the idea of the motif, in the usage of the general functions as narrative units, and the usage of the spheres of action is somewhat like a structure of characters and types of dramatis personae built upon smaller comparative narrative units. Therefore it is important to include Vladimir Propp into our selective look at the folkloristic tradition of science.

#### 1.2.2.5: Antti Aarne and the index of types

There is no conceivable way that the science of motifs, as we use the term today, could have arisen without the Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne (1867-1925) and his work. The effort laid down by Aarne in the creation of an index in which to place different types of folklore and stories seem to have arisen from a purely practical need. This was primarily because although folklorists studied and collected material from all over the world, it was difficult to use by others because it was not made accessible by something as simple as a proper cataloguing of the material they collected. When confronted by this very basic problem facing the science of folklore studies Aarne proposed in his book “*Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*” of 1910 that there should be made a common system of cataloguing folklore material, to further facilitate its study and used by different scientists. Aarne did however primarily envision a catalogue based on the type of story, not based on the individual motifs, but did nevertheless create what



would become the groundwork of the motif index system. Aarne writes these words on the usage of type versus motif as an indexing system:

“So far as possible a complete narrative has served as a basis for each type. It might also naturally be conceivable to work out a classification of separate episodes and motifs, yet this would necessitate such a cutting into pieces of all complete folk-tales that the scholar would be able to make a much more limited use of the classification. Nevertheless in some instances one is compelled to depart from the method decided upon.”  
(Thompson 1946: 417)

As seen here Aarne proposes an index more based on the overarching narrative instead of its individual narrative elements, i.e. motifs. In spite of this Stith Thompson rightly points out that over half of the types of story that Aarne proposes to use in his index of type can be viewed as singular motifs, which because of their simple nature also can easily be used as a part of a system based on type. According to Thompson the innate problem of the index of type arises when one tries to classify the larger and more complex folklore stories, where each story is comprised of large groups of motifs. Thompson points out that Aarne has a serious problem with cataloguing after type in these instances, since it is difficult if not impossible to narrow it down to one type or motif that could define the entire story. Furthermore, if one were to narrow it down to one defining motif, what would that motif be? Aarne has in his index three main groups of stories:

The Animal Tales: Stories that feature animals to a greater degree as a part of the narrative. These tales are further defined by types of animal.

The Folk Tales: A group of stories that contains ”wonder-tales”, religious stories and stories about the “stupid ogre”

The Humorous Tale: Stories whose primary objective is merriment and humor.  
(1946: 418)

With these distinctions it’s easy to see Thompsons point about the larger and more complex narratives, as he says in “The Folktale”:

«For the tales of the stupid ogre it has been difficult to find a satisfactory place in the classification. They are really wonder-tales and as such should be placed along with other wonder-tales, but since, on the other hand, in their character and nature they resemble the humorous tales, they have been placed as the last group of the regular folk-tales, next to the humorous anecdotes. (...) Sometimes it happens that the same tale can be assigned to two different groups. In the company with a supernatural adversary or helper, for example, a magic object may appear. The issue as to position is decided in accordance with which factor is most important for the action of the tale.”(1946: 418)

As we can plainly see from this excerpt an index based solely on type wouldn't simply make it hard to catalogue, but it would be a constant effort of continually making compromises and exceptions, with not much progress being done in the way of making the tangles of materials easier to navigate. The effectiveness of this way of indexing is rightfully questioned, although it has to be noted that Aarne himself never intended this way of indexing to be in any way shape or form a complete and fully developed form of cataloguing, and that as such it isn't a reasonable demand to make of the index (1946: 417).

#### 1.2.2.6: Stith Thompson and the Aarne-Thompson Motif Index

Stith Thompson (1885-1976) began the arduous task of his motif indexing project in 1923, and published in 1932 the "Motif-Index of Folk-literature". It was naturally inspired by the earlier work of Antti Aarne, as Thompson used the same numeric system and adopted many of the distinctions that Aarne had used in his index of types. As was mentioned in Thompson's own definition of the term Motif, mentioned earlier in this chapter, to isolate the individual smallest recognizable elements (i.e. motifs) from the larger narratives, and then systematize them. In his efforts Thompson chooses to completely disregard any and all notions of "relationships" between texts and stories, in addition the grouping of motifs are primarily based upon a logical system of similarities between the individual motifs (1946: 423). Thompson does argue, as did Aarne before him, that the cataloguing in itself is not academic research per se, but to a larger extent can be used as groundwork and stepping stones in further research. The index does not in itself give answers to any questions one might have, but can help in the quest for the answers one seeks by making it possible to see patterns emerge and giving a different mode of comparing stories based on individual elements, as to facilitate further discussion regarding the wanderings and rise of certain motifs and stories among different cultures and peoples.

The system itself is divided into groups of motifs, ranging from A-Z by themes. As an example we can see that A gives us an overview of motifs connected to creation. The motifs range from the creation of life naturally or by way of Gods or Demigods. Category B on the other hand is a collection of motifs connected to animals, primarily mystical and magical animals and creatures, ranging from dragons to talking birds and so on (1946: 424). Contrasting to this category J is a collection of motifs connected to traits like wisdom, cunning and stupidity, while category Q is primarily focused on

those that are based on punishment or rewards. Following each of these major categories there are several subcategories that gives us a short list of different scholars that have studied and interpreted this particular motif, which was then followed by a section about the geographical distribution of said motif where applicable (Hansen 2002: 22).

#### 1.2.2.7: Motifs as a basis for the comparison

As we have seen in the previous part of the thesis the history of the term motif in the sciences has been a varied one. The usage in the Stith Thompson Aarne Antti motif index seems to be the culmination of that history, with a simple yet elegant definition of the term that is applicable and easy to use when confronted with the multitude of characters, roles, traits and situation one finds within the folktales of the world. While certainly not unassailable by the critics the definition formed by Stith Thompson in “The Folktale” has been around for decades, and seems to be the reigning description used when the term is figured.

With this in mind is this particular definition something universal and unchangeable? It may be the case in the studies folklore, but if we were to use it effectively in the science of Religion, and to use it as a marker for abilities, traits, roles and personalities within the framework of the mythologies and their stories certain changes in focus should be made to further facilitate the maximum effect of the motifs constructed. Does this mean that I will try to construct an entirely new definition of motifs, discarding the Stith Thompson definition of the term? That is certainly not the case. Does it mean that I will modify it to further suit the needs of the method? Yes, a number of changes in focus and structure must be made, in addition to a less arbitrary parameter for the grouping of words into the category “motif”.

#### 1.2.2.8: Stith Thompson’s definition and usage

As the definition of the term by Stith Thompson is fundamentally instrumental as the base for our own usage it is natural to further expand upon the thoughts and definitions that made the term a functional unit for classification. I will devote this part of the thesis to expanding and pointing out what the different parts of Thompsons definition of the term “motif” mean in practical terms. I find this necessary in the process of illuminating the changes I find to be

needed in applying the method to our own field of religious characters and universes. The quote I choose to use is as previously mentioned from the book *The Folktale*:

«A motif is the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition. In order to have this power it must have something unusual and striking about it. Most motifs fall into the classes. First are the actors in a tale - gods, or the unusual animals, or the marvelous creatures like witches, ogres, or fairies, or even conventionalized human characters like the favorite youngest child or the cruel stepmother. Second come certain items in the background of the action – magic objects, unusual customs, strange beliefs, and the like. In the third place there are single incidents – and these comprise the great majority of motifs.” (Thompson 1946: 416).

As we can see by this definition the term “motif” as used by Stith Thompson is very wide indeed, encompassing a great deal of classes. The problem with this definition is in my mind that it still falls into the realm of “type”, and that the distinction between classes are too arbitrary. If we were to compare the focus points of Thompson to the one I try to make the case for in this thesis we would see that Thompson has his focus clearly set on the “story” as the primary “entity” while I am to make the case for a motif system that favors a focus on the characters, and let the motifs reflect upon them. To put it in another way, while the folkloristic way of thinking is that the characters in a story are elements shaped either wholly or mostly by the stories in which they appear, I believe that in the cases of the religious entities which persist from story to story to a larger degree has the story being shaped by the entities. That is to say that while in folkloristics, where a character or character type primarily appears in one kind of story and is shaped by the events, the entities of polytheistic religion appear in multiple stories, in which we can argue their personalities shape the stories to a larger degree than the other way around.

This is the basis from the folkloristic science which I will have as a starting point before comparing and contrasting it to the different theories postulated by the selection of comparative mythologists.

### **Part 1.2.3: Building on a foundation of comparative mythology**

When faced with a project influenced by a scientific field that is somewhat removed from one's own we must not forget the massive amounts of research and academic scholarship that exists within one's own field. Although the inspiration for this project indeed came from the studies of folklore, the thought process that created the framework for the project was firmly rooted in the works done by researchers closer to the study of religion either as scholars of the study of religion, or as an important contributor to other scientific fields that concern themselves with religion and its effect on people, society and literature. If this enterprise is to become a successful one, it is only because it is built upon a foundation of theories of which it is a logical step forward.

I would like in this part to compare the motif method which I have derived from the work of Stith Thompson and Antti Aarne with the thoughts of French philologist George Dumézil, his countryman anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, the theories built around the archetypes of Carl Jung, and the Rumanian Religious historian Mircea Eliade, whom I all believe to have interesting factors in their research that gives credence to the thought of using motifs to compare religious figures. As is plainly evident these researchers are of a varied background in fields that encompass many aspects of history, culture and language. This is however only natural as the study of any aspect of our cultural expression is a product of the many ways in which it is expressed, what that expression means culturally today, in time and at any point in history. In other words one can say that it is almost impossible to extract the expression from its frame. The important fact remains however that these scholars are all important in some degree to the field of *comparative mythology*, which is in essence the driving thought behind my own project. Another important point to make about my selection of theorists is that they all tried to use their theories to give insight into another part of their research, their work in the field of creating comparative forms and types were often driven by a need to create easier reference points to give credence to their more overarching theories. With my selection I hope to illustrate the many uses in which comparative mythology built upon the basis of this kind of comparative framework has yielded interesting finds and results in different forms of science.

As the careers and literature of these men are both vast and intricate I will focus on certain parts of their scientific theories that, in my opinion, relates to the thought of studying and comparing religious stories and characters with basis in smaller units of comparison. The motif-structured comparison model that this master thesis tries to make an argument for is by

and large simply another way to extract interesting points of comparison. Implicit in this statement is however my belief that interesting as these methods are, there is room for a new approach, and I will in the presentation of the models that each scholar uses offer my own opinions on the positive and negative aspects of their views before presenting my own model for the motif-indexing procedure. This exercise is done to explain in which way my model differs and with the thought of what that difference offers in the process of comparison between units of religious stories and figures. I also believe that there are interesting points in all of these approaches that are important factors to include in my own approach, which will further illustrate the broad background and foundation of my method and its validity. I will not rigidly follow any kind of chronology as the theories I wish to examine are not necessarily born out of inspiration or criticism of each other, and as it is the thought patterns of specifically using smaller and more detailed units of comparison that is the point of this part of the thesis, I hope that the reader will indulge me my wish to place the scholars and their works in an order that further facilitates the point I'm trying to make.

#### 1.2.3.1: George Dumézil: The Indo-European Triad

The French philologist George Dumézil (1898-1986) is widely regarded as the leading force behind the studies of the Indo-European and Proto-Indo-European society, culture and religion. He defined himself as a “paleo-philologist”, which in essence meant that he was to use the study of philology, the study of historical linguistics, to construct a picture of our distant past (Miller 2003: 27). The theory being, in essence, that we could trace a great majority of our religion, culture and languages back in time to a Proto-Indo-European source, and that we could by examining and comparing the different religious figures and their roles in the pantheon to construct an idea of what kind of society and culture shaped our ancestors, and in effect, us. As the studies of the Indo-European roots of language was being devised a thought of a system of culture and religion with common roots in a Proto-Indo-European past began to take hold, as it is only logical that shared roots in language also implies shared roots in regards to culture and religion, as they can be seen as contingent upon and products of the language in which they are shaped.

George Dumézil's career was spent mostly on creating and expanding a theory of an Indo-European pattern of society and religion, as it is expressed in myths found in different parts of what is understood to be the Indo-European influenced world. In his 60 year career

was to try to make out certain patterns (French: *idéologie*, which is used in both a dominant and latent form) in the enormous amounts of data found in the Indo-European language family (2003: 27). Within the texts he examined he started to postulate a theory of finding a pattern among pantheons of polytheistic gods, this pattern being a partitioning of the entities roles into a threefold structure. This is what Dumézil later named the “*Idéologie Tripartite*”, or the “Triad of Three Functions” as it is often translated to in English.

In its simplest form the theory of the partitioning of divine entities into three functions is that there exists within religions a pattern of societal hierarchy based upon three distinct hierarchical classes. The theory was influenced by the work French sociological theorist Émile Durkheim, who taught that the sacred elements of culture, that being entities, themes or “essences”, reflect a society and its social divisions, which Dumézil then applied to his own reading of the texts from the area of Indo-European language influence. The way Dumézil divided the gods and divine entities is explained by the man himself thusly:

“I have proposed, for the sake of brevity, to call this structure “*the ideology of the three functions*”. The principal elements and the machinery of the world and of society are here divided into three harmoniously adjusted domains. These are, in descending order of dignity, sovereignty with its magical and juridical aspects and a kind of maximal expression of the sacred; physical power and bravery, the most obvious manifestation of which is victory in war; fertility and prosperity with all kinds of conditions and consequences, which are almost always meticulously analyzed and represented by a great number of related but different divinities among whom now one, now the other typifies the whole in formulary enumerations of gods. (Dumézil 1996: 161)

As is seen by Dumézil’s writing, he perceived the mythical landscape of religious figures as divided into a ruler/priest caste, a warrior/guardian caste and a producing/supporting caste. The pattern of the triad was in Dumézil’s opinion evident in religion and culture spanning from the Indian subcontinent to the northern reaches of Europe, like in the Norse culture of Viking age Scandinavia. Dumézil offers several examples of triads in Indo-European, such as the triad of the Norse mythology where the sovereign function is exemplified by Odin, the warrior function is exemplified by Thor and the third function by the Vanir god Freyr. In Vedic and pre-Vedic Indian religion Dumézil uses the triad Mitra-Varuna (F1), Indra (F2) and Nāsatya (F3) as examples. In the Roman pantheon of gods Dumézil uses the trio of Jupiter (F1), Mars (F2) and Quirinus (F3). Within these three functions Dumézil later postulated a theory that that they all potentially could be split into dualistic aspects of themselves, who stands in contrast and opposition to each other, while still being within the same realm of function. These functions, he proposed in his treatise on the Indic gods Varuna and Mitra,

could be split up into a “light” and “dark” aspect, as he judged the “Open, Right hand and jural” manifestation of sovereignty found in Mitra’s character was in opposition to the darker, more mysterious “left hand” manifestation one could find in Varuna. He also made the same point when dealing with examples of warrior-aspects in northern Europe, where “The Warrior of Thor” was described a cooperative and social example of a warrior, while “The Warrior of Odin” was an example of the egotistical and destructive anti-social aspect of warrior culture (Miller 2003: 29).

When regarding the triad in the religious and mythical stories found among our ancestors Dumézil did in particular invest time and effort into the cases of what he called “interfunctional war”, where gods of different triad functions apparently waged war upon each other, as described by David Miller:

Another important sub-theme is the I-E ‘war of foundation’ or ‘interfunctional war’ which Dumézil found to emerge as a thematic mechanism or dramatic encounter to explain the recreation of an integrated I-E society out of an earlier scenario where the first two Functions, sovereignty (F1) and warriorhood (F2), had become separated from the third, ‘fertile’ Function (F3). He found three clear examples of this conflict and its resolution: one in the Scandinavian North, in the Eddic myth describing the combat between sets of gods, the Æsir and the Vanir; one in Roman ‘historicised myth’, that is, the war and then the alliance between the Romans and their Sabine rivals; and one in the Indic (Vedic) mythic tradition, where the Asvinic (F3) gods were finally drawn into a fully tri-functional order. The special features of this eventually constructive confrontation were, first, the attempt from the F3 side (Vanir, Sabines) to use their wealth in acts of bribery to undermine their foes, and second, the act of ‘high magic’—*grand magie*—undertaken by an F1 figure, to halt the war and bring together the two sides. (2003: 29)

Although we must point out that, as fitting as it is with the theory of the triad, the “interfunctional war” is a theme seldom found within the cultural and religious texts of the peoples within the Indo-European sphere of language. We do however see clearly Dumézil’s main focal points of comparison when promoting his theory, the Indian myths as they exist within the Vedas, the Roman pseudo-historical mythical accounts and the mythology of Viking age Scandinavia.

When applying the three functions found in religion to the actual societies George Dumézil was somewhat more hesitant. Although the hierarchical structure seems to be evident in some of the societies found within the Indo-European family, Dumézil theorizes that the structure itself was abandoned by the different peoples, and rather existed in the realms of



myth and religion as a model for a “ideal” society, the likes of which was not easily recreated within human societies. The examples the structures are however found, in Dumézil’s opinion, within the very effectively structured conquering and administrative force that the Indo-Europeans themselves proved to be when subjugating other peoples (Dumézil 1996: 163).

Some modern theorists have expanded upon the work of George Dumézil with theories of their own, adding new ideas and expanding upon the three functional structures. Among these theories are the ideas of Kim McCone, who tries to establish the connection between the functions and the age of the manifestations of the functions, i.e. that F1 primarily are embodied by “wise, old men”, F2 is often manifested in the form of “mature, warlike men”, while in contrast F3 is embodied to a large degree by “potential immature or adolescent males”. Another expansion on the three partitioned structure is by theorist Emily Lyle, who makes the case for a fourth power in the shape of an overarching female potency, that simultaneously supports the three others and is hierarchically placed beside them all (Miller 2003: 32). So as we can see, the structure is gaining in complexity in light of new theorists interpreting the same and new sources.

As we can see from these examples Dumézil did construct and expand upon his own framework for comparison between gods and religious entities, with the intention of proving a cultural and societal partitioning into the three Proto-Indo-European castes. That being said Dumézil himself scoffed at the notion of being called a “structuralist”, and did in his own mind not so much “create” any categories or types of which divine beings were to be adapted to fit. In his writing Dumézil is a “paleo-philologist” who finds a pattern hidden within Indo-European writings and cultures, and tries to recreate forgotten structures within texts were these patterns are more between the lines than in plain view. He did in addition never mean the structure that he believed to exist within the Indo-European religions to be in any way, shape or form indicative of a shared human mental landscape or experience, as his focus at all times were upon the Indo-European influence zone in particular. It is however interesting to compare this to the project of motif-indexing religious characters with the goal being a larger comparative process. George Dumézil created a framework for comparison by using large categories of forms and types, by dividing the gods of the Indo-European influence zone, and gaining much support and academic interest for his work, being lauded as one of the great theorists within the Indo-European research field, he is the prime example of the fact that any framework of comparative traits and roles can in itself create an interesting result and

scientific value. When faced with the question of whether or not the comparison between different configurations of minimal literary units, like motifs, can yield any results to lend credence to Dumézil and his theories, the answer could very well be yes. One can make an argument for the three part structure as extremely generalized, but they may be expanded upon and made more detailed by using smaller units of comparison, and creating a larger framework than exists within Dumézil's writing.

#### 1.2.3.2: The archetypes of Jung in the landscape of Myth

With great strides in psychoanalysis and psychiatry made by Freud, the foray of the mythical landscape lay wide open for interpretation by the pioneers of the science of the mind in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Swiss Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) is lauded by many as the father of analytical psychology, and the developer of many key elements of the modern psychoanalytical field. Jung devoted much of his time to exploring how the facets of the human mind and unconsciousness manifested itself through different avenues of human expression, with special weight placed upon myths and religion. Jung was very interested in the connection between figures and narrative themes of myth and legend, which he paralleled with the creations of dreams in the human sub consciousness. To understand this however, one must be acquainted with some of the assumptions made by C. G. Jung in his writings on the subject, the first of which is the "Collective unconscious", and the extension of this manifested through the "Two kinds of thinking". Jung did not wholly agree with his predecessor Sigmund Freud regarding the nature of the unconscious, and opted for a different explanation of the phenomena. Freud held the unconscious psyche of man to be important, since it was a receptacle of repressed memories and thoughts, holding it to be a completely of a personal nature (Jung 1959: 3). Jung on the other hand made the case for the unconscious, or at least the majority of it, being of a collective nature, shared by humans in the same way our physical features and anatomy is shared among our species. As he says in "the Relation between Ego and the Unconscious":

"... to the degree that human brains are uniformly differentiated, the mental functioning thereby made possible is also collective and universal. This explains, for example, the interesting fact that the unconscious processes of the most widely separated peoples and races show a quite remarkable correspondence, which displays itself among other things, in the extraordinary but well-authenticated analogies between the forms and motifs of autochthonous myths. The universal similarity of human brains leads to the

universal possibility of a uniform mental functioning. This functioning is the collective psyche.” (Jung 1971: 93)

The thought of all humans sharing within our psyche a common landscape of images and symbols pertaining to certain phenomena laid the groundwork for the theory of the myth, and commonalities found in them, to be an expression of our collective unconscious. This is where the primordial images and archetypes exist, within the realm of the collective unconscious, and by extension within one of the two modes of thinking according to Jung. He was of the opinion that there were two modes of thinking, where one is, as a product of the collective unconscious, the basis for symbols and archetypes found in the human mind and myth. The first mode of thinking is the *Directed thinking*, which is at its core a mode of communicating and working with ideas through speech elements, this is in Jung’s theories a tiresome, logical patterning of thought that is based wholly in reality and logics. In contrast to the Directed thinking stands the *dream/phantasy thinking*, which is removed from reality, spontaneous and communicated in our minds by way of images (Jung 1949: 22). In Jung’s theories the latter kind of thinking was, although indicative of the human minds inner workings, almost entirely unproductive, this because its lack of correction by a logical thinking about the realities of the world invariably produces a distorted and “infantile” image of the reality we inhabit (1949: 36). These phantasies that are created in our second mode of thinking is in Jung born out of a want for what we are lacking, and the simple psychological patterns of these wants are easily traceable in the myths of earlier civilizations:

“The stutterer imagines he is a great orator (...), the poor man imagines himself to be a millionaire, the child an adult. The conquered fight out victorious battles with the conqueror; the unfit demented or delights himself with ambitious plans. We imagine what we lack. The interesting question of the “why” of all this we must here leave unanswered, while we return to the historic problem: From what source do the phantasies draw their materials? We chose, as an example, a typical phantasy of puberty. A child is that stage before whom the whole frightening uncertainty of the future fate opens, puts back the uncertainty into the past, through his phantasy and says, “If only I were not the child of my ordinary parents, but the child of a rich and fashionable count (...). And the count would take his child back to his wonderful castle.” (...) At one time, and that was the ancient world of culture, the phantasy was an openly acknowledged institution. The heroes – I recall Romulus and Remus, Semiramis, Moses and many others, have been separated from their real parents. Others are directly sons of gods, and the noble races derive their family threes from heroes and gods. As one sees by this example, the phantasy of modern humanity is nothing but a re-echo of an old folk-belief, which was very widespread originally. (1949: 32).

As we can see by Jung's writing the patterns in the human mind and in religious stories do seem to repeat themselves in interesting ways, although not explicitly stated in the quotation above I believe we can deduce the general idea of the "wants" mentioned to be universal and timeless, as they are expressions of the human psyche. Jung goes on to draw parallels between several mythological themes closely related to the human psyche, among them sexual assault and the theme of animal sexuality. With the basic understanding of the Jungian thoughts on the emergence of myths as phantasies derived from the sub conscious wants of the human mind, we can go on to describe the Jungian Archetypes.

The Archetypes of Jung are described by the theorist himself as primordial ideas that appear as a natural process within the human mind, as a result of the mechanisms of the dream/phantasy thinking. Jung describes his archetypes in relations to dreams, which was in Jung's theory the clearest form of the second kind of thinking, thusly:

"But just as no individual is differentiated to the point of absolute uniqueness, so there are no individual products of absolute unique quality. Even dreams are made of collective material to a very high degree, just as, in the mythology and folklore of different peoples, certain motifs repeat themselves in almost identical form. I have called these motifs "archetypes", and by this I mean forms of images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as autochthonous, individual products of unconscious origin. The archetypal motifs presumably derive from patterns of the human mind that are transmitted not only by tradition and migration, but also by heredity. The latter hypothesis is indispensable since even complicated archetypal images can be reproduced spontaneously without there being any possibility of direct tradition." (Jung 1958: 50)

As is becoming clear to us Carl Gustav Jung's theories were somewhat born out of the same patterns of thought as the ones found in Stith Thompson, Aarne Antti and George Dumézil, in the case of recognizing the similarities between several cases of mythological figures and narratives. He does however shy away from the historic-geographical way of thinking, in favor of a more universal thought of archetypes being able to evolve and be spontaneously created within the human mind. We do however also see that Jung's agenda is to make the argument that myths, and the archetypes found within them, are first and foremost phenomena that reveal "the nature of the soul" (Jung 1959: 6).

When compared to the motifs of Stith Thompson and the triad of George Dumézil the archetypes and primordial images that Jung writes about and makes the case for are more ideas and patterns than they are related to any distinction based on the content of the figures or situations they represent (1959: 79). As the "the mother archetype" manifests itself in a

great variety of forms, Jung mentioning the mother of God, the Virgin, Demeter and Kore, or in a figurative sense as the Kingdom of God, the archetypes of Jung are always “empty and purely formal”, and is in essence a possibility of representation, and its manifestation being determined in large part by innumerable factors beyond the archetype itself (1959: 79-80). Jung further describes the collective unconsciousness and its archetypical mother image as being projected upon the mother by the fantastical mode of thinking.

Another archetype favored by Jung was the “Shadow”, which was much more in tune to Sigmund Freud’s perception of the unconscious, it being a primordial image and symbol of the dark and hidden aspects of one’s own psyche. The archetype of the shadow is most often a dark mirror image of one’s own person, a reversal of the civilized, a primitive kind of personality akin to a more beastly nature, just as with the other archetypes the dualistic nature of light and darkness has mythological personifications of demons, devils, witches and the like (Gras 1981: 476).

As it is the Jungian archetypes are large entities made up of a huge variety of individual variations and forms. They are primarily used when concerning mythology to be basic psychological categories into which we can place different characters based on their roles and traits. With this in mind we do however encounter the problem of the framework of archetypes being very large, with the differences and similarities within each variation of manifestation being of little concern to the theorist that examines them. As shown by the mother archetype the variations themselves can be widely differing as long as they show the same principle and collection of certain traits belonging to the archetype into which they are bunched. As a focus for this thesis the examination of the Jungian archetypes are important to show the usage of mythological images as a window into the human mind, and to point out that widely differing images and figures do share significant similarities beyond the superficial and physical. We can also extract the point of the universality of the myths and mythological archetypes, into which Jung made the argument for the collective unconscious as a universal human trait belonging to the deep reaches of our human psyche.

#### 1.2.3.3: Mircea Eliade and his patterns of comparative religion

The Rumanian scholar Mircea Eliade is a fitting addition to our brief look at comparative mythologists, as he not only believed fervently in a universality of religious patterns, but also because he was an author of fiction with roots in the fantastical and religious. Mircea Eliade

had a firm belief in the universality of religious symbols, and believed that these patterns and archetypes were the key to understanding religion. Eliade was very interested in the concept of a *hierophany* or a “manifestation of the sacred”, which he argued was anything that showed us a modality of the sacred at a specific time. He mentions as an example:

“For instance, the following Vedic text addressing a dead man: “Crawl to your Mother, Earth! May she save you from the void! “This text shows the nature of earth worship; the earth is looked upon as the Mother, *Tellus Mater*; but it also shows one given stage in the history of Indian religions, the moment when Mother Earth was valued – at least by one group – as a protectress against the void, a valuation which has been done away with by the reform of the Upanishads and the preaching of Buddha” (Eliade 1996: 2).

Eliade argues that although every hierophany is an historic event, that does not remove any of its universal qualities, and makes the case for hierophanies with worldwide significance, like Eliade’s favorite universal hierophany, the cosmic tree that stands as the center of the universe, which he calls the *Axis Mundi* (1996: 3). In Eliade’s work the axis mundi, or “center of the world”, is a term used about several mythological concepts that he believes to be connected through the universal term. Eliade argues that the cosmic tree, the tree of everlasting life, or the tree of knowledge of good and evil, are in effect aspects of the same universal thing, namely the tree that is at the center of the world. The tree is also often guarded by some monster who guards the golden apples/golden fleece etc. (1996: 380). This is very indicative of Eliade’s theories of the universality of religious concepts, or the patterns of religions. If we were to connect this to the Norse religion which is our focus, Eliade gives us the example of Odin, who hangs himself in the cosmic tree Yggdrasil, which is his initiation into the knowledge of runes (1996: 81). Eliade also argues for concepts like the sky god being a supreme deity, with an equation of Odin to this type of deity. The arguments of Eliade behind the sky as a symbol of the supreme powers are as follows:

“The transcendence of God is directly revealed in the inaccessibility, infinity, eternity and creative power (rain) of the sky. The whole nature of the sky is an inexhaustible hierophany. (...) When this hierophany becomes personified, when the divinities of the sky showed themselves, or took the place of the holiness of the sky as such, is difficult to say precisely. What is quite certain is that the sky divinities have always been supreme divinities. (1996: 40)

We do however see that when Eliade is writing about Odin and Thor, the Norse Aesir, he fails to give any reason for his belief that they are sky gods. He describes Odin as the supreme god of the Norse pantheon, which is a logical conclusion, but there are few mentions of him being particularly connected to the sky directly. This is in contrast to Thor, whom we can argue was

a sky god in that he was connected to the phenomena storm and thunder. This is very indicative of Eliade's theories, that the universality is a great concept, but not always argued for by evidence found in texts and cults, as the similarities to other related concepts validates the universality simply by being similar. To expand upon this, here is a note made by Eliade about symbols in the book "Images and Symbols":

"Finally the study of religion will shed light upon one fact that until now has been insufficiently noted, namely, that there is a logic of the symbol. Certain groups of symbols, at least, prove to be coherent, logically connected with one another; in a word, they can be systematically formulated, translated into rational terms. This internal logic of symbols raises a problem with far-reaching consequences: are certain zones of the individual or collective consciousness dominated by the *logos*, or are we concerned here with manifestations of a "transconscious"? (Eliade 1991: 37)

As we can see Eliade does indicate that the universality of the patterns and symbols found in religion may indeed be of a universal nature. When comparing the theories and writings of Eliade to the term Motif, and the terminology which is beginning to take shape, we see many of the same notions that are in the archetypes of Jung. Eliade does indicate that certain symbols can, and do, have the same form or meaning across time and space, which gives credence to the notion of comparing and contrasting these comparative units to each other. Both Eliade and Jung can be connected to the thought of the concepts that we discussed briefly in the introductory chapter.

#### 1.2.3.4: Claude Lévi-Strauss the structuralist approach and the Mytheme

Our search for great scholars within the comparative mythological field cannot be deemed successful without taking into account the work of French Structural Anthropologist and Ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. As many others he saw the patterns of universality found among the many and varied stories among the peoples of the world, and the Native Americans was of special interest to Lévi-Strauss. Arguably the most important man in the field of the structural study of myth and mythological stories, his approach to the study of myth was based in a keen interest in language. Lévi-Strauss made a point of regarding myths as comprised of smaller units identifiable in a system based on linguistic thought. As is said by Lévi-Strauss in his work "The Structural Study of Myth", three points of the relationship between mythology and linguistics become apparent, namely that: 1. The meaning of mythology can only be derived from the way the isolated elements of a story are combined. 2. Although myth and language belong to the same category, myth, being a part of language, it is

clear that the language found in myth unveils specific properties. 3. Those properties are only found if one searches above the basic level of linguistics (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 431).

The basic level of linguistics was for Lévi-Strauss the analyzing of words and sentences with regards to phonemes (sound), morphemes (grammatical units) and semanthemes (units of meaning). Lévi-Strauss was of the opinion that when searching for the constituent units of a myth, the meaning and “mythical value”, one must search within a “higher” and more complex order of constituent units. These units, sometimes called *Gross constituent units* and more commonly *Mythemes*, were Lévi-Strauss answer to the question of what these small units of relations which give myths their inherent meaning.

We could go as far as describing the structuring of the mythemes of Lévi-Strauss as “bundles of motifs” that separately show the relationship between characters or concepts in the form of a sentence, and that it is the patterning of these motifs that constitute a Mytheme. To illustrate this I will show the example that Lévi-Strauss himself uses in “The Structural Study of Myth”, namely his analysis on the Oedipus-myth:

“The myth will be treated as would be an orchestra score perversely presented as an unilinear series and where our task is to re-establish the correct disposition. As if, for instance, we were confronted with a sequence of the type: 1,2,4,7,8,2,3,4,6,8,1,4,5,7,8,1,2,5,7,3,4,5,6,8..., the assignment being to put all the 1’s together, all the 2’s, the 3’s etc.; the result will chart:

1	2		4		7	8
	2	3	4		6	8
1			4	5		7
1	2			5		7
		3	4	5		
					6	8

We will attempt to perform the same kind of operation on the Oedipus myth, trying out several dispositions until we find one which is in harmony with the principles enumerated under 3.1 (EDIT: The usage of sentences and the structuring of mythemes). (1958: 433)

As the chart into which Lévi-Strauss pours the motifs which he extracts from the Oedipus myth is quite large I will try to make better use of the space by explaining the four categories of which Lévi-Strauss groups his motifs, and pointing out that they follow the chart of similarities and patterns as illustrated by the numerical representation in the quote above. In the first category Lévi-Strauss groups the motifs “Kadmos seeks his sister”, “Europa ravished



by Zeus”, “Oedipus marries his mother Jocasta” and “Antigone buries her brother Polynices despite prohibition”. This first category he calls the “overrating of blood relations”, while the second category, which is a grouping of kinslaying, is described as the polar opposite “underrating of blood relations”. As we can observe by these categories the theories of Lévi-Strauss is mostly built upon the thought of opposition of elements and themes in the motifs. This also becomes evident as the thought behind his third and fourth category, the third being a grouping of the slaying of monsters (dragon and sphinx), while the fourth is the names of Oedipus and his father, which Lévi-Strauss translates and interprets as being connected to “difficulties to walk and to behave straight”. The third column deals in Lévi-Strauss’ opinion with the autochthonous origin of man, in which he puts particularly heavy emphasis on the dragon as a chthonic being that stands in the way of “man being born from the earth” (1958: 434). This in turn according to Lévi-Strauss connects it to the fourth column, since he interprets the inability to walk or move properly as a common trait among those who are born of the earth in different mythological thoughts, like the pueblo. As we can see, Lévi-Strauss opts to extract smaller images or parts of the story to use as basis for comparison. He disregards the timeline of the narration to be able to see every extracted part as a comparative unit to contrast or compare to the other units extracted (1958: 433). These motifs and clusters of motifs are central to the interpretation of the story by Lévi-Strauss, although we do see him relying upon a specific knowledge and conclusions drawn from his own subjective conclusions.

If we were to look these gross constituent units/mythemes as an inspiration, there are several ideas we can take from them. We see that Lévi-Strauss believes in the theory of extracting and isolating smaller units of comparison from stories. We see that he considers these units as having in themselves some remarkability and meaning that makes them important as tools for comparison. We see that there is a focus on language, which the gross constituent units are to be considered and read as a part of language. What we do see however is that the focal point of comparison is on the story rather than the entities within, just as the folkloristic sciences. One of the points that I would like to get across is the moving of the focal point from the story to the entities that appear within the story, with the point being that these entities shape the stories in which they appear. We should also note that the method used by Lévi-Strauss is heavily reliant upon the interpretations done by the scholar himself, and some would perhaps say that the linking of Oedipus’ name and the religious image of men being born from the earth. This last thought is presented by Lévi-Strauss as a universal

religious image, although the examples he gives are of Native American origin, far from the roots of Greek religion. This does not mean that he is wrong, only that the universality of religious images may be discussed before it is accepted fully as a fact, a discussion that the method I am devising might aid in.

#### **Part 1.2.4: A new definition of the term Motif**

After examining first the folkloristic roots of the term, and contrasting it to the different relevant theories made by scholars of comparative mythology, we should be able and ready to define the term “Motif” to further facilitate our needs as students of mythology and religion. As we have seen the overlap between the definition set by Stith Thompson and the different frameworks of comparison made by the comparative mythologists does overlap to some degree. We do however need to define some of the other relevant terms first to make the definition of our term “motif” more comprehensible.

##### **1.2.4.1: Entity**

As we saw in part 1.1.6 the idea behind this project was sparked by the question “what is a god made of”. And the first tentative attempt to answer it gave us the “words”, in regards to a literary entity. Another question that is relevant in this part is “what is an entity”, since I use the term extensively. As the stories of Norse mythology, and other polytheistic religions, are populated by characters and monsters from several classes, the term is not class specific. The Jötnar and alfar of the Norse mythological landscape are just as deserving of the term entity as the god-class Aesir and Vanir. The term may not always denote specific characters either, as I will use it for situations as well, at least in possible future endeavors. To be more precise, I will use the word entity to denote any and all characters, places and situations that are in some way the focal point of the story and sentence in which it appears. If we are to go back to the introduction and 1.1.6, we can see that the entities seem to be characters that are made up of a certain amount of “words”, with our introduction to the term motif, we can shift this definition from words to motifs.

So the term “entity” can be defined as any character, place or incident that is the focal point in the story, and that is made up of a “motif-cluster” which denotes its various traits or “body of words”. With this term in hand we can see that the Aesir Thor is an entity, just as the

Fenris Wolf, the hammer Mjolnir, the realm of the Jötnar (Jötunheim) and the Aesir-vanir war (which is not a part of our corpus, but is used in this context because of it being a situational entity).

#### 1.2.4.2: The important factors to incorporate

As we have seen the distance between the motifs of Stith Thompson is sometimes near and other times far from the usage by the comparative mythologists, so we will have to extract from each the points which we will use in our new and more relevant definition of the term. As mentioned earlier the definition made by Stith Thompson does have its share of problems when one seeks to use the term to make a framework of comparison.

The first point I would like to step away from in my own definition is the arbitrary nature of Stith Thompson's motifs. As we have discussed earlier the motifs of Thompson are actors, items, and single incidents. This, and the usage of the term in the motif-index of folk-literature gives the impression of the term being vague and all encompassing. As I have shown, my definition of the focal point connected to, and made of, motifs in a story, namely the "entity", can be argued to fall under the same criticism. I do however believe that my focus on the entity will make the extracting and categorizing of motifs easier, since the focus is on the entities that appear in the story, rather than the story itself as the main entity. The reason being, as mentioned before, that the characters and places we encounter in the stories set in a mythological and religious landscape often do appear in several different stories, and as such should be considered more primary than the stories themselves, although the stories give them their motifs. So we deviate quite a bit from the definition made by Thompson in that the "actors" and "items" of a text are not only motifs in themselves, but primarily clusters of motifs, which constitutes their "body of words".

Another point to make is what the motifs that are not entities themselves actually are. We can draw our lines to both Thompson's motifs and Lévi-Strauss' "gross constituent units" to denote the motif as it is defined by its function. In Thompson the motif is "the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition", while the gross constituent unit is in Lévi-Strauss' writings isolated elements in the text as presented to us in the forms of sentences, that also convey the meaning of the text through the interpretation of these elements. Both of these definitions are relevant to our own, as we define motifs as an isolated, small unit of comparison, either defined by words found directly in the text, or as the gross

constituent units found in the reading of the text as higher more complex systems of storytelling.

As I see the term motif, it is a constructed term. The motif is a construction of two or more words or other motifs that in themselves denote a larger meaning by association. This is a throwback to the usage by Richard Wagner and the German romanticists, who used it as a literary technique. The motif is a word or a visual image that either by itself, or in conjecture with others of the same kind, can be interpreted to imply, symbolize or convey a larger associative body of characteristics and connections. With the former paragraph in mind we can establish that although the primary size of a motif is small, they can be of a larger size as well. As a motif is a construction of words, images or smaller motifs, we can make the case for the entity “Thor” being a motif in itself, as it is an entity comprised of smaller motifs, and that these motif-clusters and entities themselves can be seen as larger motifs. This idea shows us immediately the connection to the archetypes of Jung and the patterns of Eliade, since these are more vague types of entities they are made of motifs that themselves have only a few constituent motifs to give them shape, as seen in Jung’s definition of “the mother”. In the case of the three functions of Dumézil the situation is the same, but we do see that the functions found in his works are made of more defined traits and characteristics that we could define by the process of cataloguing motifs.

#### 1.2.4.3: The definition of “Motif”

With all these points discussed we can make an attempt at establishing our own definition of the term motif, which is the term we will use in the third part of this thesis, namely the construction and application of a dual method of motif-extraction. We have incorporated or shown the connection to the history of motif research as it is seen in the study of folklore, and we have contrasted to and made use of the field of comparative mythology to reach this definition. I propose that the definition should be this:

*A motif is a small unit of comparison comprised of singular word or image, or a collection or “cluster” of these, which denote a larger body of associations used to describe an entity. These motifs have to be able to stand on their own as general comparative units. The focal point of the motifs should be the entity to which it is connected, and is to be used in the comparisons of entities found in religious literature.*

The definition is in my opinion short, concise and to the point, when all the factors have been thoroughly explained and accounted for.

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## Part 1.3

### The textual sources

#### 1.3.1: The choice of a Norse mythological corpus

To set precise boundaries on this thesis I have compiled a corpus of Norse mythological texts which I will focus on when developing, using and explaining the dual methods of extracting the motifs that define religious entities from literary sources. The selection process was done with specific goals in mind, both when dealing with the near textual and the interpretational approaches to motif extraction. The texts I have chosen are as follows: *Alvissmál*, *Thrymskvida*, *Skirnismál*, *Lokasenna* and *Vavtrudnismál*. I will in the space of the following pages give a brief summary of the texts, and make the argument for my reasoning for their inclusion in the corpus.

#### 1.3.1.2: The Codex Regius

The compilation of Norse corpus that I have made share that they are all present in the Icelandic collection of Eddic poems which is called *Konungsbók*, or *Codex Regius* in Latin. Scholars have long debated the ages of the different texts within the *Codex Regius*, and most make the argument for the texts being written between the year 750 and 1230 (Ulvestad 1954: 58). Most of the texts found in the *Codex Regius* exists only in this collection of texts, making it an essential part to reading, understanding and researching Norse mythological texts.

#### 1.3.1.2: Thrymskvida

*Thrymskvida* is a mythological poem found in the *Codex Regius* collection. It consists of 32 verses, and is a poem that has overtones of humor. The timeframe in which the poem could have been written is very uncertain, with theories ranging from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the pagan religion. The literary historian F. Jónsson made the case for it being an early text because of factors like *Thrym* sitting on a mound, a custom which became obsolete in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and the presence of a humorous tone. The humorous tone can be interpreted as the story being written in a society in which the Norse religion was so ingrained and without threat that humor was not frowned upon by the believers. In contrast to this, other scholars

have pointed out that the poem is of a literary quality in rhythm and style that would denote it being a lot younger than the 9<sup>th</sup> century. To corroborate this theory some say that the tone and the joking tone surrounding the story of the gods make the case for this being a story written in light of Christianity and a lacking respect of the gods of the Norse pantheon. This being said many believe that the evidence favors an early conception of the poem (1954: 59).

The story of the *Thrymskvida* is as follows: The áss Thor wakes up to find his hammer stolen by the jötunn Thrym Lord of the Thursar. He gets the help of Loki who flies to Jötunheim and confronts Thrym, who demands Freyja in return for the hammer. After the Aesir and Vanir have held council it is decided that Thor and Loki shall travel to the wedding disguised as Freyja and a serving maid. At the wedding Thor gets a hold of the hammer and kills everyone present.

This text is one of the most well-known of the mythological poems about the Norse pantheon, primarily because of its interesting story and humorous tone. My argument for including it in my corpus, and the case for it being a text which is a good example to use for my dual methods of motif extraction, are twofold. Firstly it is a story that brings the protagonists out of their comfort zones, Thor being the very image of masculinity in the Norse pantheon, dressed as a woman for one, Thor not having the very symbol of himself and his authority being the other. The second part is that the story itself is saturated with images, almost in every sentence there exists some motif to be found and studied, with physical, mental and character traits in abundance.

#### 1.3.1.3: Skirnismál

*Skirnismál* is a mythological poem consisting of 42 verses, and is in large part a dialogue between Frey's servant Skirnir and the jötunn Gerdr. The age of the poem is often theorized to be around the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The case being made for it showing traces of an older cult built around the worship of Frey. As well as containing what many believe to be an example of a magical formula as it is viewed by primitive people, further supporting the early dating (1954: 61-62).

The story in *Skirnismál* is rather easy to summarize, since most of it is in the form of a conversation. The god Frey sits upon the throne *Hliðskjálf* (most commonly Odin's throne) and saw into all the realms. He sees a fair jötunn by the name of Gerdr and instantly craves her. He sends his servant Skirnir to her father's home to ask her hand in marriage. When Gerdr refuses Skirnir tries to persuade, bribe and finally threaten her with gruesome images of



life should she refuse Freyr. Finally she gives in, and Skirnir returns to Freyr with the good news.

The poem of Skirnismál is included in the corpus because of the very interesting situations and frightful images that is conjured up by Skirnir. The poem gives an excruciating description of the worst sides of the Norse mythological landscape, as well as giving interesting descriptions of the god Frey, especially in regards to his role and aspects of lordship.

#### 1.3.1.4: Vavtrudnismál

Vavtrudnismál is one of three texts within the assembled corpus that is primarily in dialogue form (the other two being the afore mentioned Skirnismál and Alvisismál), and one of two which concerns themselves with an intellectual contest between one of the Aesir and a member of a different class of supernatural being, in this case one of the Jötnar named Vavtrudnir. The dating of this poem is believed to be the late 9<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> century, the assumption made on the fact that it is a poem with a simple style and a dramatic narration, more akin to a story told to capture audiences than to be a product of someone trying to preserve the story or make a “handbook of old mythology” (1954: 63).

The story of Vavtrudnismál is as follows: The god Odin gets the idea to seek out the giant Vavtrudnir, who is famed for his wisdom, and challenge him to a duel of knowledge. His wife Frigg cautions Odin against challenging Vavtrudnir, as he is powerful and dangerous, and very wise. Odin travels to Vavtrudnir’s hall despite the warning, and introduces himself to the jötunn as “Gagnráðr”. This name is often translated as “the one who advises against” or more freely translated “antagonist in argument” to suit the story better (Simek 1993: 97). After showing Vavtrudnir that he knows some basic knowledge about the Norse mythological world the duel starts in earnest, with the jötunn suggesting that they wager their heads in the contest. What follows is Odin, still in the disguise, asking a series of questions to Vavtrudnir who answers them all. Finally Odin asks a question about what Odin whispered in the ear of his son Balder when he was being burned after death. Vavtrudnir then discovers the true identity of his adversary, concedes defeat and forfeits his head and life to Odin.

The inclusion of the story of Vavtrudnismál was made on the basis of the answers given to Odin’s questions in the course of the duel. The answers given by Vavtrudnir gives an overview of the Norse mythology from its creation to its end, from the killing of Ymir to

Ragnarök, and is therefore a very interesting starting point to build a larger basis for the Norse mythological motif database. Although the amount of detailed information is rather small, the general outline of the beginning and end times gives rise to a myriad of entities and motifs that are relevant to this thesis. In other words, the incorporation of Vavtrudnismál into our corpus gives us an easy way to map the motifs pertaining to the fate of many characters, and to the events that occurred in even the gods “mythical past”.

#### 1.3.1.5: Alvissmál

Alvissmál is a mythological poem containing 35 verses about a duel of the mind between Thor and the dwarf Alviss. It is dated to be from around the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the reasoning being that the text is more likely a poetic reworking of Skaldic poetry, like the list of names found in the Thulur, another poetic text. Some scholars have pointed out the similarities between this text and Vavtrudnismál, and theorize that Alvissmál may have been based on the structure of the first (Simek 1993: 12-13).

The story of Alvissmál is that Thor comes home from a journey to find that the dwarf Alviss intends to wed his daughter. Thor refuses this marriage on the grounds that ultimate authority is his, and he was not home at the time of the “engagement”. Thor and Alviss then begin a duel of knowledge where Thor asks Alviss of the different words used by different classes of entities in the Norse mythological landscape, i.e. what the Aesir, elves, Jötnar and men call the sky/sun/moon/earth. Alviss answers all the questions seemingly without difficulty. Thor then concedes that he has seldom seen so much wisdom in one individual, but he also says that he has betrayed him and that he only engaged in the contest to let Alviss be caught by the sun’s rays and turned into stone.

The point in including Alvissmál into the collection of texts that I choose to use as a basis for the database of motifs in Norse mythology is to facilitate the creation of entity cards and motifs connected to phenomena that are only somewhat personifies or not personified at all in the mythology. This, in addition to giving us possibilities to interpret the names and synonyms of these phenomena as an indicator of the mindsets of the entity-class that attributes it, gives us an interesting viewpoint of the mythology as a whole, and many opportunities for exciting motifs.

#### 1.3.1.6: Lokasenna

The Lokasenna is a text which contains a whole 65 verses, in addition to a prologue and epilogue. As the other texts the age of the text is heavily disputed, with the same arguments being made about this text as was made about Thrymskvida in regards to its portrayal of the gods of the Norse pantheon. Some scholars argue that the text was written in the time of pagan religion, since the words used between the gods don't seem to denote a Christian viewpoint, and that the fact that the gods are all ridiculed has parallels the satirical speeches sometimes found in to Indian mythology. Others see the caricatures of the gods as indicating this being from the transitional period between Norse religion and Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Some scholars place the Lokasenna as late as in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, because of the pantheon being portrayed very close to the ideas found in Snorri's works (1993: 193).

The plot of the Lokasenna is that the Aesir and Vanir are invited to a feast in the halls of Ægir the sea-jötunn/sea-god of Norse mythology. When praise was being heaped upon the serving men of Ægir, called Eldir and Fimafeng, Loki flies into a rage and kills Fimafeng. Loki is then promptly evicted by the other gods, but enters again and starts spewing insults at the assembled gods, all while demanding that an oath sworn by Odin protects him. After insulting all the assembled gods Thor enters the hall, having come back from a journey to the east (probably the realm of the Jötnar). He threatens Loki until Loki finally leaves. After the feast Loki is bound with the intestines of one of his sons while a snake drips venom into his eyes. He is bound in this cave while his wife Sigyn collects the venom in a bowl, but has to periodically empty it, leaving Loki unprotected. His writhing in pain is then said to cause earthquakes.

I argue that the Lokasenna is an essential text to incorporate because of its portrayal of an almost complete pantheon of the Norse gods. The insults of Loki and the words offered in defense by the other gods create almost innumerable motifs connected to the personality and traits of the assembled gods. It is also very interesting that we have the traits of the gods caricatured in such a way by the insults of Loki, as they show us not only how the gods are portrayed, but also tell us something of what the Norse community and the world of thought surrounding the Norse pantheon deemed to be either honorable or dishonorable traits.

### Bibliography 1.3

Ulvestad, Bjørn 1952: "How Old Are the Mythological Edda Poems?" Published in Scandinavian Studies Vol. 26 No. 2 May 1954. Published by University of Illinois Press. Found on [www.jstor.com](http://www.jstor.com), using access granted by the University of Oslo

Simek, Rudolf 1993: "Dictionary of Northern Mythology". Published by D. S. Brewer, an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd, Suffolk UK.

## **Part 2:**

### **The method of motif extraction**

#### 2.1: A short introduction

In this part of the thesis I will give a comprehensible outline of the dual methods of motif extraction which I have devised from working with my Norse corpus and my new definition of the term Motif. I will establish both the near-textual and the interpretational approach to motif extraction and illustrate the different points by way of examples taken from the Norse corpus. I will also describe some of the problems that arise from each method, and compare them to one another when dealing with methodology, boundaries and results. I will start with the near-textual approach to motif extraction, and follow it with an example of the process. After that I will go into detail about the interpretational approach. Before I attempt to discuss the methods there is some need of some general definitions and issues.

##### 2.1.1: Entity-classes

When dealing with groups of entities that are either named as separate, or shown as separate by actions or other definitions, I will make usage of the term “class” to classify that group as a separate kind of entity. This allows us to make use of a neutral simple term when dealing with the different “species” of polytheistic religions. In the Norse mythology there are several groups of different entities which define themselves as distinct by way of their group names in the texts, and by the members of each class. Examples of these are the Aesir, Vanir, Jötnar, alfar etc.

##### 2.1.2: The dangers of preconceptions: “giant” as a translation for jötunn

This is an example both of the kind of trouble we can encounter within the reading of translated texts, and of the usage of motifs to reach a conclusion. If we are to examine the etymological roots of the terms used about the class of entities we call “Jötnar” as a broad term, as is proper when dealing with a source material that is at times a bit on the short side when dealing with physical characteristics, we should be aware of the many uncertainties that

exists around the interpretations. The common thought when talking about the etymology of the word *jötunn* is that it is derived from the word *eta*, or “eat”. This is believed to be related to the Proto-Germanic term *Etunaz*, which can be translated as “glutton” or “over-eater” (Simek 1993: 180) this is usually translated to mean “man-eater” and is attributed to a giant stature. If we look at another term used for *Jötnar*, namely the word *Þurs*, henceforth Anglicized as “thurs”, we again see that there is no direct indication of it being connected to size in any way. The term is used mostly as a synonym for the word *jötunn*, but with a more negative connotation because of its connection to the *Þ*-rune, which is believed to be connected to dark and dangerous properties of magic (1993: 333). This seems to point to the fact that the notion of the *Jötunn*-class being the same as giants is not supported by the etymology of the terms, at least as we know and interpret them today.

If we look at the stories there are *Jötnar* who are immense in size and stature, it is something we cannot ignore when reading the Norse literature. Examples range from *Ymir*, the giant whose body was divided and shaped into the heaven and earth, the Midgard-Serpent, who coils around the earth, and *Skymir*, the giant whose mitten Thor and Loki believed to be a cave. In the article “Giants in folklore and mythology: A new approach” the Austrian-American scholar Lotte Motz collects words connected to *Jötnar* in a way that closely resembles the near textual approach to motif extraction to dispel the notion of size being a trait inherent in the entity-class. She writes:

“The following adjectives are used in the Eddas in reference to giants: ‘aged’ (Hav 104, Faf 29, Scir 25, Grim 50, Thrym 32); ‘all-golden,’ said of a female (Hym 8); ‘all-wise’ (Vaf 1, 5, 34, 42); *ám-áttigr*, probably meaning ‘loath-some,’ (Vsp 8, Grim 11, Scir 10); ‘Happy as a child,’ (Hym 2); ‘White-browed’ said of a female (Hym 8); ‘ahrd, stubborn or dangerous,’ (Vaf 32, Hym 17); ‘fair,’ said of a female (Scir, prose passage); ‘prophetic,’ said of females (Grot 1); ‘stern’ (Har 20, Grot 9); ‘tyrannical, hard in counsel’ (Hym 10); ‘ice-cold’ (Faf 38, Vaf 21); ‘very wise’ (Skald 18, 26, Hym 5); ‘hard to deal with’ (Skald 26); ‘heavy with food’ (Hym 30); ‘celebrated’ (Hym 21); ‘mighty’ (Grot 1); ‘moody, gloomy’ (hym 5, 21); ‘stud-glorious’ (Grog 1); ‘unhappy’ (Hym 26); ‘bright, shining,’ said of a female (Grim 11); *scautgiarn* (Hynd 30), where the second element means ‘eager’ but the first is obscure; ‘proud. Fierce’ (Har 15); ‘of a fierce mood’ (Har 19). These adjectives do not show size to be an important aspect of Eddic giants.” (Motz 1982: 73)

As Motz shows us, the size of the “giants” seem to be of little or no importance to the creators of the Norse mythological literature, with few or none of the adjectives used being related to size in any way. This in addition to the many different times the Aesir/vanir have had erotic interaction with the *Jötnar*, or they use the same eating utensils etc. points to immense size being one of the traits that a *jötunn* *can* be defined by, but which by no means is

a general trait or a motif among them. Motz continues in this line of thinking when she reasons that the Jötnar of Norse mythology is more clearly defined by shared feature that can be defined as “otherness” or that they share in the common feature of all being “different from the gods” (1982: 73). There are such a huge variety of Jötnar in regards to sizes, whether they are in humanoid or animal shape or other factors, like the number of heads, that the only general characteristic one can point out is that most of the characters who are counted among the Jötnar have some character trait or motif associated with them that sets them apart from the more “normal gods” (1982: 73-74).

This is just one example of the dangers of letting our preconceptions color our own reading of the text, which is one of the driving forces behind these methods I am proposing in this part of the thesis.

## Bibliography 2.1

Motz, Lotte 1982: “Giants in Folklore and Mythology: A New Approach”. Published in “Folklore” Vol 93, No 1 1982. Found on [www.jstor.com](http://www.jstor.com), access granted by the University of Oslo.

## **Part 2.2 The near textual approach to motif extraction**

As we have mentioned earlier this thesis will concern itself with two differing ways of extracting motifs from a religious text, the two being a near textual approach and an interpretational approach to the process. Questions may very well arise to the necessity of two methods, is it not more practical with a single universal approach to not complicate matters without cause? In my opinion these two methods are both instrumental in the study of motifs and the motif clusters connected to religious figures in the format of text. They are also not in reality two different methods all together, but rather two points on the same spectrum. That is not to say that they are both universal however, but because of the work being done by me is on the format of literature an easy method of acquiring motifs and comparing them has been made possible.

If we go back to a statement made by me earlier in the thesis, namely that a religious character in a text is an entity made up by the motifs that exist within the text and which are that entity's constituent parts, the thought behind the near textual approach comes quite logically. As a motif is extracted from a sentence or a word in a sentence, is it not practical to simply approach the extraction of these motifs by making it possible to use these words as searchable and possible motifs? We have seen earlier that singular words very well may be motifs, as long as they are connected to the entity in question. The format of a text, especially when this text is searchable through the use of relatively simple means on a computer, makes it very possible to create a very easily accessible way to not just find these motifs, but to compare them as well. If we were to search the word "unmanly", which is in addition to being a simple word indicative of the motif of gender-bending of which the Gods of the Norse mythology are so terribly afraid, we find the word used about the god Loki 5 times in the Lokasenna. As this is so heavily attributed to him, mostly by insult, it is safe to assume that it is an important motif connected to Loki. We can also note that it is used by Thor to indicate his fear of losing masculinity when disguised as a woman in the Thrymskvida, and in the Lokasenna Thor is the one who calls Loki unmanly a total of 4 times, so it is an important motif in regards to Thor in this context as well, in view of him representing the ultimate masculinity. That being said, the motif of Thor as being a hyper masculine entity is only clear with a larger degree of interpretation of the meaning inherent in the sentence, meaning that it is in this case not a part of the near textual motif extraction. The approach is a simple process that can yield measurable results, especially if in the future the database encompasses even more texts than it does in its present form.



### 2.2.1: Setting the boundaries

One of the key features of the near textual approach to motif extraction, which gives the method its strengths, is set boundaries that keeps it from becoming reliant on interpretational efforts. The method is in its essence very straightforward, with the text itself and the wording therein doing most of the work. I will reference these boundaries several times when dealing with the methodology and aims of this method, so they will have to be set beforehand.

The first set boundary is to have each text be a completely separate study, with as little reference to each other as possible. The point of this being that our perception is to be free of the preconceptions we have to the entities that appear in the text, and we are to avoid making assumptions based on knowledge about the entities as they appear in other text than the one that the method is being applied to. Although all the motifs, traits and characteristics that we extract are applied to the same entity card, the exercise is not futile, since it keeps us from “streamlining” the entities. This is in contrast to the other method, the interpretational method, which to a larger degree tries to streamline and incorporate knowledge that can be considered “common knowledge”.

When dealing with names in Norse mythology we see that there is an abundance of secondary names, epithets etc. that denote the important characters and items in the text. Here we have to erect a boundary regarding what we logically can deduce and what is beyond that point. If we first consider names we have to have a good basis for equating the name with an entity in the text, which is to say that there has to be a logical link between the names. Most of the names given to the entities of the Norse religion can be applied to the correct entity using common sense, and does not rely on any elaborate mental exercise to be deemed correct. In the text *Alvissmál* we know that the entity with whom the dwarf *Alviss* has his mental duel is the áss *Thor*. The important thing to note is that we know this in spite of the name “*Thor*” not appearing in the text. The primary entity identifies himself by the name “*Vingthor*”, which is one of the known secondary names of *Thor*. The logic does not require any leap when identifying this entity as the áss *Thor*, as the name “*Vingthor*” is a construction of the name *Thor* with the Norse word commonly translated as “battle” (Simek 1993: 364). Armed with the logical deduction of the secondary name constructed around the primary name *Thor*, we can be safe in our assumption that this is indeed *Thor*. As an example we can look at the hammer of *Thor*, *Mjólnir*. In the text *Thrymskvida*, the hammer is named only one time, but the word hammer is used twelve times. If the naming of the hammer was not present the boundaries set for the textual study could not permit the motifs connected to the word

“hammer” to be applied to the entity “Mjolnir”, simply because the item, although clearly a hammer and belonging to Thor, is not specified as being the hammer “Mjolnir”. As it is specified in Thr v30, s2 that the hammer is indeed Mjolnir (“Bring in the hammer to hallow the bride; On the maiden's knees let Mjolnir lie, That us both the band of Vor may bless”), we can logically deduce that the motifs connected to the word *hammer* in this text are to be motifs connected to the item and entity of Mjolnir. This is luckily also the case with the other texts of our Norse corpus, the hammer is identified as Mjolnir in the texts themselves or, as is the case with the Lokasenna, in the very same sentence (Lok v57.s1 etc). In other instances we are however not so fortunate, as is the case with the entity that is to kill Odin in the final battle. In the text Vavtrudnismál the áss Odin asks of the jötnunn Vavtrudnir what it is that will kill Odin in the final battle, the answer given by Vavtrudnir is “the wolf” (“Ulfr”). We do know from other texts that the killer of Odin is indeed the Fenris wolf (1993: 80), but does the text itself say this? If we are to take this sentence as it stands the information about the death of Odin being wrought by the specific entity Fenrir is lacking. As we read the sentence “the wolf” can be either seen to mean an unnamed wolf, or be used to denote one of several named wolves found within the Norse mythological landscape. The text references Fenris when Odin asks about the death of the sun in the sky, to which Vavtrudnir alludes that it is the entity Fenris who “snatches” it from the sky. The question that arises here is whether or not the wolf in question is the Fenris wolf, as the Fenris wolf is the only named wolf in this text. As is the case here, we are almost driven to a conclusion by our preconceptions of characters, as the entity “Fenrir” in this context is not described as a wolf at all, but simply is the name of the entity that snatches the sun, no description given. As we can see this might be a leap in the logical reasoning which I want to apply to the method, and the so the legendary bane of Odin in the text Vavtrudnismál is simply “the wolf”. In the Lokasenna we see several references to the Fenris wolf, the binding of the entity and its connection to Loki, Tyr and Odin. In contrast to the text Vavtrudnismál we do get more information and connections between “the wolf” and Fenrir, seen in the naming of the entity as the Fenris wolf (Fenrisúlfr) and the text as a whole gives a clear impression of Fenrir, the Fenris wolf, “the wolf” and the child of “the wolf’s father” as a singular entity. As we can see by this the boundaries set by the method may not always be ideal, but they do serve a function when dealing with the connections between entities, and does stop us from “streamlining” the entities to conform to our preconceptions.

### 2.2.2: The importance of translation

The point of the near textual approach is to create a simple way to extract motifs without having to rely too heavily on the process of interpreting the texts themselves, as this is a risky proposition without the backing of a consensus. This meaning that an interpretation made by a single person is to a large degree subjective, even though it is based in factual knowledge. The near textual approach is only reliant upon a modicum of interpretation, as the only factor apparent is the translation of the texts. As I showed in the introduction to this part of the thesis, the common translation of the word jötunn as “giant” is in my opinion very misleading, and we are to be aware of preconceptions painting our reading of the text in other subtle ways as well. As mentioned earlier I will use the modern lingua franca of English to create these general motifs, and the near textual motif extraction necessitates a translation that captures the wording of the primary Norse text as well as it can. Already at this point we see that the near textual approach, although the least reliant upon interpretation, is not free of the interpretation, as it is made by the translators of the original text. As an example of this we can look at the wording in the first sentence of the *Thrymskvida* in the different languages present in the *Bibliotheca Polyglotta*.

Norse: Vreiðr var þá Vingþórr er hann vaknaði ok síns hamars of saknaði, skegg nam at hrista, skör nam at dýja, réð Jarðar burr um at þreifask. (1)

English: Wild was Vingthor when he awoke, and when his mighty hammer he missed; He shook his beard, his hair was bristling, as the son of Jord about him sought. (1)

Norwegian: Vred var Vingthor, han vaagned op, og hamren sin han savned da; reiste skjeg han, rysted haar han, «Jords» søn tog til om at famle.

If we were to create a motif of the first word, as is also the case of the motifs I have created, we see that the word “Wild” in English differs from the meaning of the Norse “Vreiðr” and the Norwegian “Vred” when seen on its own. The most obvious translation of the word “Vreiðr” is “angry” or “raging”, but that does not yield the best results when the sentence is seen as a whole, and it does not create the most appropriate or distinct motif either. The sentence reads more like that the rage of Thor is animalistic or uncontrollable, seen in the state of his appearance. The English word wild does cover more of these factors than “angry” or “raging” i.e. is it a better word and motif than these two, it does also mean however, that the translation is an interpretation of the sentence as a whole.

The most important part of the translation is that the translation of the words found in the sentences mirror the full amount of meanings and associations that are a part of the text in its original form. This is important since the near textual is dependent on a small amount of actual interpretation, but a large degree of freedom to interpret the motifs found. If we are to use another sentence from the Norse texts, this time we can illustrate this with an example from the *Thrymskvida*, verse 15, first sentence:

Norse: Þá kvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr ása, vissi hann vel fram sem vanir aðrir:

English: Then Heimdall spake, whitest of the gods, Like the Wanes he knew the future well:

Norwegian: Kvad da Heimdall haarfagrest aas, vidste han vel frem som vaner mest:

The important word in this sentence is in my opinion the Norse word “hvítastr”, used to describe the god Heimdallr. As we can see the translations are “whitest” and “haarfagrest” in English and Norwegian respectively. The word “hvítastr” is translated in its purest form in the English version, but it is interpreted in the Norwegian version of the text. The term used in the Norwegian translation is another word with another set of associations connected to it, the term “haarfagrest” can be translated as both “light-haired” or “fair-haired”, both connected to a light hair color, most commonly blonde hair. It could also however be used contemptuously to denote unmanly effeminate qualities, which was very much frowned upon in the Norse pantheon (Sturtevant 1952: 119). As we can see of these translations the difference between them is somewhat large, as the interpretation done by the Norwegian translator changes a lot of the images and traits that can be connected to Heimdallr in this sentence, simply by assuming to know the meaning of the word used in the Norse original text. The fact of Heimdallr’s “whiteness” can be interpreted in a variety of ways, fair-haired is already present in the Norwegian translation of the text, while it could also be interpreted as him being of a very light complexion i.e. very pale skinned. Another interpretation done by some is to read imagery of “light” into Heimdall (Sturtevant 1952: 119). All these interpretations are valid, but they are not part of the near-textual approach to motif extraction. The point of this method is to extract the words used to describe the chosen entities without having the need to fall back on any interpretation, the freedom inherent in the text is not lost, the meaning is not lost, and one is not in any way, shape or form dependent on consensus or discussion to reach the actual searchable results. One is however, as previously mentioned, at the mercy of the translation to English, as we are in search of generalized motifs and a lingua franca is the only way to convey this in a satisfactory manner.

### **Part 2.2.3: The Entity Card**

The simplest way to describe the methodology of the near textual motif extraction is to simultaneously describe the entity cards which we will use as a basis for comparison, and which will be populated by the motifs we extract from the corpus of texts which we will use.

#### **2.2.3.1: Primary and Secondary names**

The primary action that we will employ in the reading of texts is to extract the *names* of entities that are displayed in the sentence. The names of a character is often essential to the characterization of an entity, as it in many cases is derived from or even named after a primary characteristic of the entity in question. Examples of this are boundless, but for illustrational purposes we can establish the roots of the names the áss Thor, the dwarf Alviss and the jötunn Laufey. These three were selected to show three different parts of the spectrum in regards to the amount of interpretation done and results yielded.

The name Thor, here Anglicized from þórr, is a Norse name derived from the Proto-Germanic \*þunraR, which is the root of other versions of the name like Donar in other Germanic areas. The original word had the literal meaning “thunder”, as it seemed to indicate the element itself instead of someone wielding it, as Thor is often portrayed as doing (Simek 1993: 322). Armed with this knowledge we can extract the motif of the name Thor to mean thunder, which gives us the motif of the name Thor, and the motif of his nature substrate, which we will cover later in this chapter.

The name of the dwarf Alvíss, as he appears in the text Alvíssmál, does not require much in the way of interpretation, as it is a literal description of the characters primary characteristic. The name Alvíss is easily translated as “All-wise”, “all-knowing” or “omniscient” in old Norse to modern English (Simek 1993: 12). This is, illustrated by the text in which he appears, namely Alvíssmál, to be the most important characteristic of Alvíss. Here we can extract the motif of his primary name and also an important motif in regards to comparative purposes, as wisdom and the pursuit of wisdom is shown to be a primary concern of the Aesir and Vanir in the Norse sources.

The name of the jötunn Laufey, or Nál as she is sometimes called, shows us the problems sometimes inherent in extracting motifs from the primary names. Laufey was the

mother of Loki, shown by Loki's moniker "Loki Laufeyjarson" in poetic sources such as *Skaldskaparmál*. If we are to go by the direct translation, as is the most logical approach when dealing with the near textual approach to motif extraction, we get the meaning "Leaf-island" for Laufey or "Needle" for Nál. Rudolf Simek theorizes also that the name Laufey may be derived from the Proto-Germanic \*lauf-awiaz or "the one full of leaves" (1993: 186). This last assertion is however only a theory, and shouldn't be used to heavily on the interpretation of the motif we are to extract from the name. As we can see the possibilities for a metaphorical reading of the name is ever present. As we have seen with Thor it is possible to interpret the name as being indicative of a nature substrate, as it is in its literal translation closely tied to nature and growing plants. In his dictionary of Northern Mythology Rudolf Simek does say that the name "Leaf-island" or "Foliage-island" seems to make "little sense", most probably in regards to the names of Loki's father "Fárbauti" (cruel/dangerous striker) and Loki himself (unknown meaning), but as a further interpretation will go beyond the boundaries set by the near textual method we will not concern ourselves with this in this part of the thesis.

Presumably I have illustrated to some degree some of the work done in the extraction of motifs from primary names. We have in the case Thor some interpretational work backed with sources, yielding viable results in the nature substrate motif "thunder". In Alvið we have seen a clear motif (all-knowing) emerge from the name with a bare minimum of interpretation, while in the case of Laufey the interpretations were more extensive, and the motif extracted (Leaf-island) somewhat diffuse and hard to use in a comparative fashion, at least in comparison to the motifs in the other names.

When dealing with sources like the Norse mythological poetry and literature we see a clear tendency to give the entities within the stories secondary names. In some cases these secondary names are chosen by the character himself, as is the case of Odin in *Vavtrudnismál*, where he takes on the moniker "Gagnradi" to hide his real identity from the jötnunn Vavtrudnir. In most cases however the name is given by the author or another character present in the story, giving us the examples of positive, neutral and negative epithets. When dealing with these secondary names the only action that precedes the actual translation and interpretation of the word is to read from the sentence and the setting and ascertain which entity the secondary name is attributed to. In some cases, as with the "Thrymskvida", we start the first sentence with a secondary name for Thor, namely "Vingthor". When attributing this to a known entity the process is made very simple indeed by the inclusion of the primary name in the secondary name, shown by "Ving-Thor". This secondary name is usually

translated and interpreted as “Battle-Thor” (1993: 364), but the validity of this is uncertain as it falls into the realm of interpretations and a discussion of linguistics. In most cases the entity of which the secondary name is used is easily identified in the reading of the text, and the problem of identification in the corpus chosen for this thesis is virtually nonexistent. The secondary names tend to denote genealogical relations between characters, as seen in the examples of Thor going by the secondary name “son of Jord” (Thr v1, s1, Lok v58m s1), Loki being “Laufey’s son” (Lok v52, s2) and the “wolf’s father”(Lok v10,s1) and Vidarr being “the son of Odin” (Lok Prologue, s7) These secondary names gives us a basis for later interpretation of examples like the meaning of Thor being described as “the son of Jord (earth)”, but this has a more natural place within the interpretational method of motif extraction. When faced with the question of the relevance of the motifs of familiar ties present in the secondary names of characters, the possibilities present may give us an interesting basis for comparison. Armed with a moniker like “son of Odin” it is very possible to search for similarities and differences among the characters that have this motif present on their entity card. With this as a basis we could find the commonalities shared by the sons of Odin like the gods Thor, Vidarr, Baldr and Heimdallr.

Although the motifs of genealogy are important the most potent motifs are in my opinion present in the cases of secondary names that are given by the motifs associated with the entity. As an example we can look to *Alvíssmál* verse 3 sentence 2, where the dwarf *Alvíss* says that he has come seeking words with the “Wagon-guider” or “Wagon-lord” (Old Norse: *vagna vets*). This motif is interesting because it is a secondary name given to the *áss* Thor which denotes his ownership and usage of a magical wagon drawn by a pair of immortal goats that are given the names *Tanngrísni*r and *Tanngnóstr* in the *Gylfaginning* (1993: 325). In the same text verse 6 sentence 1 we get a motif that is a secondary name for both Thor and Odin, in the moniker Thor gives himself as the son of “*Siðgrani*”, a name that can be translated as “the one with the long moustache” (1993: 282). In this case the identification of the entity in question is based on former knowledge of the Norse pantheon, and does include some interpretational actions to reach the logical conclusion. The parentage of Thor is seldom in question in the Norse literature, with Odin being the only person mentioned as Thor’s father, this in addition to Odin being called “*Langbarðr*” (“Longbeard”) in the *Þulur* and *siðskeggr* (also “Longbeard”) in *Grimnesmál* (1993: 282) makes the assumption safe. Although it is safe in this case, we do see that we are never free from some degree of interpretational efforts.

### 2.2.3.2: Items and symbols

The third point, following the primary and secondary names on the entity card, is the motifs regarding ownership of specific items. The Norse mythological landscape has in it its fair share of magicians and master craftsmen who are able to construct the most wondrous things, which give us many examples of interesting motifs of ownership, motifs that reflect the owner, and motifs that are characteristics of the item itself.

The question is however, what kind of motifs are we after in this point, and how do we extract it. When dealing with items of an often supernatural nature we often come across items that are one of a kind, unique and named items, how do we deal with those? Well the logical thing to do when dealing with specific items that are so unique and important that they warrant being named, is to also draw the conclusion that they in that case warrant the status as an entity in the MLNM. The hammer Mjolnir is a great example of an item that is so unique and important that it is given its own name. The hammer of Thor is however so closely connected to the áss that it in most cases it is simply known as “Thor’s hammer” or simply “the hammer”. With this in mind it is easy to extract the motif of Thor as an entity with a hammer connected to him, as he is described as the owner in almost every instance of the hammer being mentioned in our selection of texts. In contrast to this, how do we deal with the hammer being stolen by Thrym, the Lord of the Thursar, in Thrymskvida? Does the entity Thrym count as an “owner” of Mjolnir? Does he warrant the connection to it as the thief who stole it from Thor? These questions are certainly valid, and are worth discussing when dealing with the near textual motif extraction, as it is not always easily read out of the context what the relationships should be. If we are going to go by the simplest of definition, which in the near textual approach is simply is by association in the next, which is that a connection must exist for it to become a viable motif that we can use in a framework of comparison. If we look at the Thrymskvida verse 11, sentence 1:

Norse: (Loke:) Hef ek erfiði ok erendi; Þrymr hefr þinn hamar, þursa dróttinn;

English: Trouble I have, and tidings as well: Thrym, lord of the Thursar, keeps thy hammer,

Norwegian: «Møje jeg havt har,saa maal og naaet; Thrym har hamren, thursers herre;

As seen here it is logical, even from a near textual approach, to consider Thrym to be connected to the hammer of Thor, as he is described as “keeping” Mjolnir. Therefore the motif of “hammer” is connected to both Thor and Thrym. When describing the importance of the motif for both of the entities we can draw lines between the hammer and its function being



essential to Thor, while the stealing of the hammer is the primary action made by Thrym as an antagonist, and the only noteworthy action he does in Norse mythology. With this in mind I think it is important that the hammer be a motif that is closely connected to both entities. Another example of a magic item featured in the stories. Other entities that may have the hammer as a motif connected to them are Modi and Magni, who is mentioned in Vavtrudnismál in the sentence “In the gods' home Vidarr and Vali shall dwell, When the fires of Surt have sunk; Modi and Magni shall Mjolnir have When Vingnir falls in fight.”.

Another item of importance that appears in our corpus is the feather-dress that belongs to Freyja. The feather-dress (fjaðrham) is an item in Freyja's possession that enables the one who wears it to fly through the air like a bird, i.e. the wearer takes on a “feather-skin” or “feather-form” if we were to translate the Norse word more directly. This is obviously connected to Freyja, as we can read from the context that she owns the item. However it is Loki who uses it, and in addition to that the action-motif “flying”, which is enabled by the item, is added to the entity cards of Loki and the feather-dress itself, but not to Freyja since she does not use it herself in the stories from which we draw our motifs. In other words Freyja, who is to be considered the owner and therefore logically the character which the motifs of the feather-dress are most likely to be connected, does not get the primary action motif of the feather-dress. This means that ownership of an item does not grant special status per se, but that the actual use of the item is the primary source for connective and comparable motifs.

When dealing with non-specific items the point of creating an entity page is lost, as the part they play in the stories are more to illustrate something of the owner than the items themselves. An example of this is the Jötnar and the animals which are in their position. In Skirnismál v10,s4 we get the description of fierce dogs being bound outside of the hall of the jötunn Gerdr, the same goes for Thrym, the lord of the Thursar, in Thrymskvida v6,s1. We can establish that the dogs are of importance as a motif as the dog as an animal is underrepresented among the entities of the Norse pantheon, with the dog which guards the gates of Hel, Gamr, as the only named example (1993: 62). Armed with this knowledge we can clearly see that the dogs kept by non Aesir/vanir class do hold some significance as a motif. Horses on the other hand do play a more active part both as companions to the gods and as items to denote wealth in our corpus. In Vavtrudnismál v11, s1-2 Odin and Vavtrudnir are talking about Skinfaxi, the “light-horse” (1993: 289) that brings the day, and in v13.s1-2 they talk about Hrimfaxi, the “soot-horse” (1993: 159) who brings the night. In Skirnismál the

character of Skirnir rides a supernatural horse that can travel through “the dark and magic flickering flames” on the way to Jötunheim. In the Lokasenna v12, s1 Bragi offers a horse in addition to a sword and a ring to Loki in an attempt to lessen the anger and hatred in the trickster god, this, and Loki’s answer in the following sentence, shows us that a horse is a symbol of wealth even among the Aesir and Vanir. So the horse can be an entity in its own right, or the ownership and “use” of a horse can create motifs on their own. This also denotes the importance of swords and rings in the pantheon as signs of wealth.

When describing the symbols of a character we may very well encounter some troubles, as the symbols are not clearly given in the text. What is needed in this case, contrary to the boundaries already set, is some interpretational work. The interpretation is however very superficial, as we only use the items or symbols that are clearly defined by the text as important to a character. In the case of Thor the hammer Mjöltnir is an obvious symbol in the visual representations of the god, and is used in the arts and in jewelry as the symbolic representation of the áss. In the literature however, there are no clear references to the hammer being the symbol of Thor, but that it is simply an item that is his, and closely connected to him. We could read this to mean that the item, as it is so closely connected to the deity, has some symbolic value as well, but this is a difficult call to make. One point to note is that the appearance of named objects belonging to entities in Norse religion are few and far between, and that obvious ownership may denote the item as having the “right” to represent the entity symbolically, as is the case with Mjöltnir for Thor and Brisingr for Freyja.

#### 2.2.3.3: Genealogy and familiar relations

As an entity card is meant to have a certain degree of information about the entities in question we do have the opportunity to include the genealogical ties between different gods where they are applicable. We have seen in the part of this chapter which concerned itself with secondary names that the monikers given to gods often inferred ties in familiar relations. This being of a normal family structure of father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter. Into this category I will also place the relationships that are made that are of a social nature, i.e. husbands, wives, romantically involved entities, foster-siblings and adopted entities etc.

#### 2.2.3.4: Nature Substrate

Another important factor when dealing with the motifs are the nature substrates that are connected to some of the deities and entities found within a mythological pantheon. In many cases in the polytheistic religions of the world a god is a personification of an element or the master of its power, common examples being the Greek god Zeus and lightning, the Roman god Vulcan with fire etc. In Norse mythology the case is the similar in regards to some aspects, while not being as clear in others. The point of the nature substrate section of the entity card is to make the case for the connections between certain entities and different natural phenomena. One example of this is found in the etymology of the name Thor, which we already discussed in the section about the primary names of entities, the name Thor does come from the Proto-Germanic word for “thunder”, making the connection to the nature substrate “thunder” very strong. Another case is made for the entity known as “Surt”, who we can establish the nature substrate-motif “fire” by Vavtrudnismál v50,s2 and v51,s1, with the wording “When the fires of Surt have sunk” (old Norse: þá er sloknar Surta logi). The clearest examples of nature substrates we can find in the etymology of certain names in the literature. As examples of these we can mention the entities Jord and Ægir, which both bear the same names as elements. Jord appears in our corpus as a description of Thor in Thr v1, s1 and Lok v58, s1, where Thor is described as being the son of this entity. Jord’s name (Jorð) is literally the Old Norse word for “Earth”, denoting an obvious nature substrate of the same element. Ægir is on the other hand connected to the sea, as the name Ægir, as in the case of Jord, is the Old Norse word for “Sea”. We have to assume that these names were given to the entities to illustrate a clear connection between the entities and the elements of which they are named.

What we do not get from the nature substrate section in the near textual motif extraction are the motifs that are linked through relationships with other characters. The relationships between nature substrates and the familiar relationships of entities is much discussed in the circles of the science of religion. In his text “Brede Kristensen’s Concept ‘Life out of Death’ ” Jens Braarvig argues for the many lines drawn among scholars when dealing with the entity Dionysos as a god of vegetation and wine (grapes), and his relations to his family of entities with him being another aspect of Kore (earth-daughter) (Braarvig 2000: 148), thus showing us the general understanding of the link between family and nature substrates, and these substrates being in essence metaphors for natural phenomena. If we were to look at an example of this from our own corpus, as well as describing some of the boundaries set, we can look at the entity Thor, who has the nature substrate “thunder” because

of the etymology of his name. Thor is the son of Jord, who has the obvious nature substrate “earth” from her name being the Norse word for “earth”. As Jord is a character and an entity within the Norse literature Thor being the son of Jord (Earth) does not denote that Thor is the son of the element itself, or that an aspect of the nature substrate earth is valid for the entity Thor. This is because the method employed does not clarify in itself the connection between the character and the nature substrate unless this is clearly written out in the text in which the motif is found, therefore it is, in my opinion, unwise to “link” nature substrates between entities without the text giving us a clear indication of this being a logical choice. This is however within the realm of the interpretational method since the reading of Jord as both an entity and a personification of the element earth is dependent on interpreting the role of Jord in that manner.

#### 2.2.3.5: Role and responsibility in pantheon

Another important point to make about an entity to have the entity card be a good description and a basis for the comparison based on motifs is to extract the role of the entity in the mythological landscape. Does this mean that that all entities in Norse religion have set roles? Or that these roles are clear and singular? Does it also mean that they are inherent in the character and ingrained in the characteristics to such a degree that they are inseparable? The short answer is; no. When dealing with the near textual approach to motif extraction the amount of clear patterns of social roles and responsibilities connected to the entities are slim, as we are bound by the limitations of the text as it is written. There are more indications and connections to roles than there are outright statements of belonging to a certain position or responsibility, but these can give us results nonetheless.

If we are to look at the methodology we should look words that indicate the roles of the entity in question. These words may be found in the shape of names, titles or actions used to describe certain entities. One example may be Thrym, the jötunn found in Thrymskvida, who is described as “þursa dróttinn” or “Lord of the Thursar”. With this in mind we add this title to his entity card under the section “Role and responsibility in pantheon”. While this seems to be a denotation of rank and authority, the truth is that this is also applicable to roles and situations entities find themselves in at a certain time, or which changes over time. An example of this can be found in the Lokasenna v32, s1 and v35, s1, where Loki and Njord himself allude to the story where Njord once given to the Aesir as a hostage after the Aesir-

vanir war. As we can see Njord plays the role of “hostage”, which is not honorable or implies any standing in itself, but which nonetheless is given as his role.

#### 2.2.3.6: Action motifs

To fully map the different traits and motifs that the entities of a literary tradition can be defined by we have to establish their primary actions. The logical approach to extracting the near textual motifs connected to the actions of the entities that inhabit a story is to look at the grammar of the sentence and isolate the verbs connected to the entity in the text. Here we do however have to use some degree of selective extraction, as not all verbs connected to entities can be said to have equal importance. The point of this statement being that a great many actions done by even the mightiest of gods and the most powerful of entities can be labeled “mundane”. It is in my opinion not important for the comparative purposes of this thesis to catalogue every instance of the verb “say” or “answer” when dealing with entity of Thor, it is however important to extract the verbs and actions that harbor in themselves a noteworthy motif. As examples of this it is noteworthy when Loki *flies* to Jötunheim and back to Asgard in the Thrymskvida v5, s1 and v9, s1. This notion is made simply because the gods of the Norse pantheon could not fly without magical means as shapeshifting or supernatural items, so the very act itself is of special importance. It also has a very general comparative property in that the act of flying itself is a notable act in human culture, humans being ground-dwellers for most of our thousands of years of history.

Another approach is to seek out the actions that represent the entity in a noteworthy fashion. Again we can look to the horses named in Vavtrudnismál, Skinfaxi and Hrimfaxi, who both have one primary verb attributed to them, which is “draw” (old Norse: *dregr*). Both of them draw their specific part of the day/night-cycle, and it is an important motif to extract regarding their characters because it is the word used to denote the action which is employed when they are performing their primary mythological function. If we then look at the always present Thor we can mention most of the actions that occur in the Thrymskvida as important and noteworthy, since it is one of the most definitive sources of characterization. The actions include well known primary actions of Thor, like the violent actions like “kill” and “strike/fell/crush” in Thr V31, s2, or the eating and drinking in v24, s2 which are motifs because of the excessive and comedic nature of the situation. The violent motifs in the Thrymskvida are only present when Thor has the hammer, and the hammer itself is the

instrument used (just as the feather-dress for Loki's flying), this means that these actions are just as important on the entity card of Mjólnir.

#### 2.2.3.7: Enemies

An important part of a polytheistic worldview is the struggle between the gods themselves or between gods and other class of supernatural beings. Norse mythology is no exception, but rather expands upon the general fighting between classes with sources telling us about some of the gods having fated adversaries in the last battle Ragnarök. In our sources we have one example of a fated encounter, as it is told by the jötnunn Vavtrudnir to Odin in Vavtrudnismál v52, s2 – v53, s1 where it is written:

Verse 52, s2. Spoken by Odin:

Old Norse: Hvat verðr Óðni at aldragi, þá er of rjúfask regin?

English: What shall bring the doom of death to Odin, when the gods to destruction go?

Norwegian: hvad vil ende Oden's dage, naar guder brat forgaar?

Verse 53, s1. Spoken by Vavtrudnir:

Old Norse: Ulfr gleypa mun Aldaföðr, þess mun Víðarr vrekka;

English: The wolf shall fell the father of men, and this shall Vidarr avenge;

Norwegian: Ulv vil sluge ætters fader, hevne det Vídar vil;

We can assume that “the wolf” in the last sentence is the Fenrisúlfr, the monstrous being born of Loki and the jötnunn Angerboda, but it is not stated explicitly in the sentence. What is the case however, is that the Fenrisúlfr is mentioned in the same text in verse 46, sentence 2, as the one who “snatches” the sun from the sky. Is it too much interpretation to assume that the wolf mentioned earlier in the text is THE wolf that Vavtrudnir mentions in v53, s1? Another case within our corpus of the same exact question arising is in the Lokasenna v58, s2 where Loki has this to say to Thor:

Old Norse: En þá þorir þú ekki, er þú skalt við ulfinn vega, ok svelgr hann allan Sigföður.

English: Less fierce thou shalt go to fight with the wolf when he swallows Sigfather up.

Norwegian: vover ei da dig, naar mod varg du gaar, sluger han seirfader hel!

Again we encounter the enemy of Odin (in this sentence called “Sigföður” translated most commonly as “victory-father”) being called “the wolf”, and again we can point back to an earlier instance in the same text where a wolf is identified as Fenrir, this time in Lok v10,s1, where Loki is given the moniker “the wolf’s father”.

In the case laid out in the paragraph above we touch upon one of the problems of the boundaries of the near textual approach. Both in Vavtrudnismál and in the Lokasenna we have to infer from the earlier statements that “the wolf” in question is the Fenrisúlfr, but does it fall within the boundaries set for the near textual method or fall into the realm of the interpretational method? I tend to lean towards the latter and that in the near textual approach we will use as small amount of interpretation as possible. Therefore the enemy of Odin is “the wolf” on the entity card.

#### 2.2.4: The construction of motifs across texts

The words that are extracted from the corpus of Norse texts and implemented into the entity cards in the MLNM are motifs in their own right, but they are also possible parts of larger constructed motifs or motif-clusters. Every motif can be used to construct larger motifs, and highlight different aspects of the entity in question. When we do this we shy away from the unity of the singular text as it stands, an move into the realm of the entity as he appears when all texts are accounted for, which is in the realm of general and universal associations. We can, from the motifs found in the Entity Card belonging to Thor construct such larger motifs as “bearded thunder-god”, since he has a beard and is connected to thunder, “Wandering warrior” since these are motifs attributed to him, or as another example “wagon-guiding thunder-god warrior”. All of these are across multiple texts and time periods, but they are all part of an entity as he is perceived universally when all texts are read, This is important since we have to assume that the general and universal aspects of Thor are not all accounted for within a single story, and that our understanding of the entity as he appears in Norse religion has to be based upon a larger framework of understanding.

We can also establish a great overarching motif-cluster simply called “Thor”, where we include all the motifs extracted that are connected to the entity Thor. And if we were to use other religious figures to establish a universal motif, we could take the motifs extracted about the entity Thor and compare them to the motifs extracted from other texts that are

connected to another entity in another religion. This is what the method could mean to the comparison of different mythological figures.

#### 2.2.5: The strengths and weaknesses of the near textual approach to motif extraction

When dealing with the dual methods that I propose it is important to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. The near textual method has several distinct strengths that make it a powerful and easy tool to use. The strengths are in my opinion the following:

1. **Simplicity:** As the near textual approach to motif extraction does not depend on any more than a small amount of interpretation it is easy to use and implement. This makes the method easily accessible to even novices among those that study the field of religion. The only thing needed to use the method is some knowledge about the religion in question, and the ability to determine if the translation into English is accurate. Besides those two factors most of the work done is simply reading the text and choosing relevant words from the sentences. The only real amount of interpretation done is the choice of nature substrate and symbol which have set boundaries of what is applicable. The simplicity of the method also means that it is easily implemented into an already existing framework, like the Bibliotheca Polyglotta, and its already functioning site mechanics.
2. **Individual work:** As the interpretations done are kept to a bare minimum the amount of work that is done in the process can be done individually by a single person, without the need for lengthy discourses about the extraction itself. As the simplicity of the method suggests, the need for detailed approval of the extracted motifs and the entity cards are also kept to a low level. Of course there is room for discourse and argumentations made for certain cases, but in its essence the method is made so a great amount of comparative material can be done by a single person, as the work I have done myself when extracting motifs from the Norse corpus which I chose. This point is included as a strong point primarily because of the contrast to the interpretational method, which relies heavily on a consensus of sources or scholars to prove the validity of the motif constructed.

The method also has its weaknesses, which I will assess here:



1. Yields few results: As the near-textual method of motif extraction is such a bound method the results yielded are mostly very specific translations, which in turn may be hard to compare across entities and certainly across religions, languages and locations. This may prove to weaken the near-textual approach and its usage as an effective tool for comparison. The generalization and streamlining of motifs to fit a larger variety of entities across the different barriers is almost non-existent in this method, which is a consequence of being as reliant upon the text as it is written. What we do see however is that when the results do match, the result is that much more potent, since the matching motif goes beyond the barriers and into what we see as “true universality”.

#### 2.2.6: Conclusion

It is my belief that the near-textual approach to motif extraction is a potentially very effective tool to use for extracting, constructing and comparing motifs across different entities, mythologies, time and texts. I argue that it is simple to use and effective in its simplicity, making it possible for a single person to create and catalogue a great deal of information without being burdened by excessive validation efforts. This creates a method that yields results at the same time as it is easy to use.

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### **Part 2.3: An example of a near textual motif extraction**

In this part of the thesis I will give an overview of the process of extracting motifs from a text using the near textual method of motif-extraction. I will use the text *Skirnismál* as my source, as it is in my corpus of sources and yields interesting results as motifs are concerned. Let us begin with the first sentence of the text as it is given in the *Bibliotheca Polyglotta*:

Norse: (Prologue :) Freyr, sonr Njarðar, hafði einn dag sett í Hliðskjálf, ok sá um heima alla.

English: (Prologue :) Freyr, the son of Njord, had sat one day in Hlidskjalf, and looked over all the worlds.

Norwegian: (Prologue:) Niords søn, Frey, havde en dag sat sig i Hlidskjalv og saa ud over alle verdner.

Here we have the entity Freyr whose name means «Lord» (Simek 1993: 91), which is the entities primary name on the entity card. We can also add Njord as a parent and create his entity card as well. The meaning of the name “Njord” is disputed, so the near textual approach compels us to simply avoid “guessing” its meaning. When dealing with the entity Hlidskjalf the text does not give us much information other than its name, and a vague state of Freyr “sitting in” it. We know from other sources that Hlidskjalf is sometimes referred to as Odin’s throne (De Vries 2000: 238) or his hall (1993: 152), which one is applicable here is unknown to us. Therefore we must create an entity card with an unknown entity type. The action motif of “looked” is noteworthy since it is in connection to “over all the worlds”, making this an addition to the action motifs found about Freyr.

*Skirnismál* v0.s2:

Norse: Hann sá í Jötunheima ok sá þar mey fagra, þá er hon gekk frá skála föður síns til skemmu.

English: He looked into Jötunheim, and saw there a fair maiden, as she went from her father's house to her bower.

Norwegian: han saa hen i jotunverdenen og saa der en fager mø, som hun gik fra sin faders sal til kvindeburet;

As we have established Jötunheim is the realm of the Jötnar, which deserves an entity card of its own for the motifs connected to it. Its primary name means literally “the home of the Jötnar”. We are going to get a little ahead of ourselves here, for the sake of not complicating the process needlessly, we use some of our prior knowledge of the text to identify the fair maiden as Gerdr, and establish her entity card. We do not have an answer to the etymology of

her primary name, although speculations revolve around its relation to the Norse word “garðr”, translated as “fenced in field” (1993: 105). This is however not sufficient evidence for us to include it into our near textual motif extraction process. We can however establish two motifs that we connect to Gerðr, which are “fair” and “maid”. Although these two are connected to each other in the text, I choose to extract them separately, with the option of combining them in a comparative fashion at a later time. We know from later in the story (v6.s1) that the father is the jötunn Gymir, and that the house is his property, so the entity card for Gymir may also be constructed. Again we see that the etymology of a primary name is unclear, so the methodological boundaries erected keeps us from applying any etymological motifs to the entity Gymir.

Skirnismál v0.s3:

Norse: Þar af fekk hann hugsóttir miklar.

English: Forthwith he felt a mighty love-sickness.

Norwegian: deraf fik han stor hugsótt.

In the case of the third sentence we have one motif connected to Freyr, since he is the «he» described in the sentence, which is “love-sickness”. We are faced here with a term that is difficult to translate fully. We know that the first part of the word hugsóttir, namely *hug-* is from *Hugi*, meaning thought in Old Norse (Simek 1993: 164) (De Vries 2000: 265). The second word *sótt* is translated as “sickness” (De Vries 2000: 531). When these two combine into one meaning we do get the fact that Freyr is overcome by some mental state not fully covered by any English synonyms. Therefore some manner of interpretation is to be made from this, and I propose that the translation that exists within the BP is close to the spirit of the text and the Norse roots to such a degree that I choose to use it as a motif in the near textual motif extraction. Although applied to the entity card of Freyr, the possibilities of this specific term being applied to other entities are small.

Skirnismál v0.s4

Norse: Skírnir hét skótsveinn Freys.

English: Skírnir was the name of Freyr's servant;

Norwegian: Skirne hed Frey's skosvend.

From this sentence we can establish the entity of Skirnir, and extract the motif «servant». We can also establish the motif “shining”, since it is the translation of the primary name Skirnir (Simek 1993: 290 and De Vries 2000: 494).

Since the space which we have to our disposal is limited I will from this point on make some leaps in the text to cover a wider variety of motifs. I will leap to the middle of Skirnir’s threats to Gerdr, when all his patience is over.

Skirnismál v32.s1

Norse: (Skirnir): Til holts ek gekk ok til hrás viðar, gambantein at geta, gambantein ek gat.

English: (Skirnir): I go to the wood, and to the wet forest, to win a magic wand; I won a magic wand.

Norwegian: (Skirnir): Til holt jeg fór, til friske trær, trylletén at faa, trylletén jeg fik.

In this sentence we get a very special item that we can connect to Skirnir, namely the «gambantein» or “magic wand”. This is the instrument which Skirnir is to use to curse Gerdr with the cruel magic which he speaks of.

Skirnismál v33.s1

Norse: Reiðr er þér Óðinn, reiðr er þér Ásabragr, þik skal Freyr fíask, in firinilla mær, en þú fengit hefr gambanreiði goða.

English: "Odin grows angry, angered is the Lord of the Aesir, Freyr shall be thy foe, Most evil maid, who the magic wrath of gods hast got for thyself.

Norwegian: Vred er dig Oden, vred æsers pryd, fiendsk dig være Frey, du frække mø! faaet har du guders vrede grum.

This sentence is very interesting because it reveals many motifs connected to Odin and Freyr which are negative and frightening. The Etymology of Odin is somewhat uncertain, since it is a Norse version of the older Germanic name *Wodan* or *Wutan*, which denote “fury” and “possession” (Simek 1993: 244), therefore we will mark down both of these as etymological motifs connected to the name Odin. To Odin we can apply the motifs “angry” and “angered”, which both denote the same aspect. When dealing with the word Ásabragr we have to choose which translation that suits our needs the most, the word *bragr* can be translated as “the first/foremost/best” (De Vries 2000: 53), which in turn also can mean “chieftain/lord” (Simek 1993: 43), the two being not mutually exclusive, but also not synonyms a choice has to be made. I chose to interpret this word in light of Odin being the oldest and the allfather, and

chose to read it as to denote his authority over the other gods. Therefore I chose to give Odin the motifs “lord of the Aesir” and “lord”, and change the translation in the BP to accommodate this. To Frey we can also apply the motif “foe”, and to Gerdr “evil” and we see a repeat of the translated word “maid”, which is just as applicable here. The last sentence again gives us talk of magic, here in the form of “magic wrath” (gambanreiði), which is a motif connected to the “gods”. In this setting I would argue that the gods that are mentioned in the same sentence, namely Odin and Freyr, are the most natural entities to connect the motif “magic wrath” to. This is supported by the word used is the non-entity class word “gods”, in contrast to the class denoting “Aesir” or “vanir”.

Skirnismál v34.s1:

Norse: Heyri jötnar, heyri hrímpursar, synir Suttungs, sjalfir áslíðar, hvé ek fyrbýð, hvé ek fyrirbanna manna glaum mani, manna nyt mani.

English: "Give heed, hrimthursar, hear it, jötnar. Sons of Suttung, And Aesir, ye too, how I forbid and how I ban the meeting of men with the maid, the joy of men with the maid.

Norwegian: Hør det, jotner, hør det, thurser, Suttungs sønner, selve de æser, hvor jeg forbyder, hvor jeg forbander møen mandegammen, møen mandegavn.

This sentence gives us entity cards for different classes of entities and to groups among them. The Jötnar, hrimthursar ((hoar) frost-Thursar) and the Aesir are clear enough, and can be added without trouble. We can also add a nature substrate to the class “hrimthursar”, since the primary name for the group includes the word “frost” or “ice”, which I prefer to use over the more detailed “hoarfrost”. Some trouble does arise when dealing with the wording of “sons of Suttung”, since it is not clear from the context what the name implies. We know from other source that Suttung is a jötunn from which Odin steals the mead of poetry (Simek 1993: 304), but that is not mentioned here. There are no indications from this sentence if the sons of Suttung is a distinct group from the others mentioned, or if it is a synonym or a secondary name for one of the other. Therefore I propose that the “sons of Suttung” and the entity Suttung gets their own entity cards, one for the class/group of entities, and one for the entity for which they are named by relations. We can add “forbid” and “ban” to the action motifs of Skirnir, and observe the motif of Maid in connection to Gerdr appearing again two times.

Skirnismál v35.s1:

Norse: Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs, er þik hafa skal fyr nágrindr neðan;

English: "Hrimgrímnir is he, the thurs who shall have thee in the depth by the corpse-gate;

Norwegian: Hrímgrímnne have til husbond du nede om liggrind langt;

In this sentence we can extract the entity Hrimgrímnir, which is a combination of «hrim-» which we translated as “frost”, and the name “Grimnir”, which we can translate as “the masked one” (Simek 1993: 118), from the root *Grima* which means “mask” (De Vries 2000: 188). On his entity card we can write down the nature substrate “frost”, and add “mask/masked” to his motifs. He is a Thurs, which denotes his class of course, and could potentially make the case for frost being one of the nature substrates of the Thursar as a whole. In the original translation by Bellows the last words in the sentence was “in the depth by the doors of Hel”, I opted to change the wording “doors of Hel” to “corpse-gate”, since this is a more literal translation of the text, not hinging upon the lines drawn from the realm of Hel to this gate by the translator. We can create an entity card for this location though with the motifs “corpse” and “gate”, and add this as a motif connected to the entity Hrimgrímnir.

As our space is limited, and this is purely an illustrational example, this will have to be the end of the example. I have in this example shown the thought processes and the methodology in action, which in the case of the near textual extraction method is built purely within the limits of the text, which I believe I have illustrated in this example. It was also my intention to show the simplicity of the method in action, as there were very few motifs or entities that were created from anything other than simple logic and reasoning.

### Bibliography 2.3:

Simek, Rudolf 1993: “Dictionary of Northern Mythology”. Published by D. S. Brewer, an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd, Suffolk UK.

De Vries, Jan 2000: “Altnordisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch”. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, the Netherlands.

## **Part 2.4: The interpretational method of motif extraction**

As shown by the previous part of the methodology of motif extraction, the boundaries of the near textual method does bar many results that are based upon interpreting the text to a smaller or larger degree. We can also see that the near textual method is only applicable, as the name implies, to the medium of text. Although the near textual method in itself can yield many interesting results, and is certainly in itself a valid source for a great deal of interesting comparisons between entities found among the religious texts, we do see the limitations it has when dealing with sources that convey information in a non-literary way. In the introduction to this thesis I did speak at length about the popular culture of our present times being related to the motifs we can find in religious entities, but the near-textual method has shown itself to be less than apt when dealing with extraction of motifs from these sources. To do this we need another method of extracting and comparing motifs, without the boundaries set by the near textual method. This does however, as I will discuss at length in this part of the thesis, set certain traps and pitfalls as it is hinging upon the personal interpretation rather than a clear written word. All of this will be addressed in this part of the thesis.

### **2.4.1 The roots of the interpretational method**

Every aspect of writing, reading, creating or discussing are dependent upon some degree of interpretation, and almost all work done in the study of religion has elements of interpretation. With this “revelation” and the near textual method of motif extraction in mind, we can see the need for a method of motif extraction and comparison that has a larger degree of freedom than the strict boundaries set by the near textual method. This is not only to extract more motifs that are of a more unclear nature, but also to both generalize and split apart some traits and tropes in religious entities. The point being that the interpretational method is freer, and makes it possible to go beyond the simple extraction of motifs and into the realm of constructing motifs from sentences. This gives us a larger degree of freedom to incorporate words and traits into a larger whole as well, instead of traits like for example strong, powerful, mighty etc. being just their own motifs, they can now be incorporated into a larger category and general motif in regards to physical strength. This is in contrast to the near textual approach, where each of these words stands apart from the other as they are elements of the text of which they are extracted. The hypothetical process of incorporating these words and motifs into a larger motif is however dependent upon interpretation of the source, as all of

these words can denote other factors than physical strength. If we however deem them to describe this attribute, and therefore fall into the category of this “motif cluster” it has to be an interpretation made with a basis in the knowledge of the text and a logical approach to the meaning of the sentence in which you find the motif. We will return to this point later.

Another part of the problem to which the interpretational method of motif extraction is the answer is when dealing with the sources that are of a different medium than the written word. What good is it to have a specialized method of extracting words from a literary text if we are dealing with a representation of a god in a stone carving or in a movie? These mediums do rely very heavily on interpretation on the part of the motif extractor, since the intention of the creator cannot be ascertained so easily as in the written word. As motifs are made of a collection of associations, which gives them the power to persist, so does the different visual media do the same, as they convey meaning that has to be processed and found by way of seeing and interpreting images.

#### 2.4.2: Interpretational method with a near textual basis

The interpretational method of motif extraction is a logical offshoot of the aforementioned near textual method in that it can incorporate the results found in that method, and build upon its foundation. In a textual source the words and images conveyed directly never lose their power, and the interpretational method of motif extraction does not exist as an entity that is wholly differentiated from the near textual method, rather it builds upon it and removes boundaries which we put down to make the near textual method as easy to use and implement as possible. The etymology of Laufey, the mother of Loki, as we saw it in the near textual context created the motif “Leaf Island”, and a “vegetation” nature substrate, as these were logical conclusions come about by a direct translation of the name. If we were to create motifs in an interpretational light we could transcend these boundaries, and create motifs that are logical but maybe more in the realm of associative motifs than direct ones. We can with the basis in the near textual motif basis of “leaf island”, together with the “nature substrate” create interpretational motifs ranging from the safe assumption of the entity having the motif “connected to vegetation”, to further leaps in logic like “nature goddess”, “tree goddess”, “personification of the forest” and all the way to the extremes like “resurrecting entity”. The last one is simply an example of how far one could go in the creation of motifs, with the basis in vegetation in light of seasons, and with other entities connected to vegetation and seasons



that have resurrected like the spring etc. The near textual approach gives us a great platform for the interpretation of simple motifs into more elaborate ones, as the interpretational approach is not bound by the “confines” of the other method. Another example we can use is that of Alvis in the text *Alvismál* v2, s4, where Thor compares the dwarf to a Thurs. In the near textual approach the motif of Alvis being likened to a Thurs stands as it is, although it obviously is a jest on the dwarf’s expense. The boundaries set by the near textual approach gives little leeway to this, as the process of creating a motif from an ironic statement is beyond the simplicity of the method as it stands at this time. We do however have that freedom in the interpretational approach, and the sentence can be read in many ways. As I have written earlier the word “thurs” is kept in lieu of the original translation by bellows of all variants of Jötnar becoming “giant”, this to keep the negative connotations that are normally associated with the term thurs in contrast to the more neutral jötnn. With this knowledge in mind we can construct several motifs from this sentence. The term is usually seen as a joke which shows Alvis’ small size in relation to the “giant” Thursar, but as we have seen earlier this is not a school of thought that I necessarily put much stock in. I would rather see the sentence as a joke in regards to the dwarf Alvis’ lack of threatening nature, as he is diminutive and probably not intimidating in any way. The explanation behind this reasoning is that the Thursar mentioned in our corpus are all threatening in some way, either as the enemy of Thor in *Thrymskvida*, the ancient and huge creatures of the mythical creation in *Vavtrudnismál* or as creatures that are used in the threats of Skirnir in *Skirnismál*. As we can see the negative and threatening associations connected to the term Thurs are much more relevant than the actual size, although size is also a factor here, as it is a contributing factor in Alvis’ seeming harmlessness. So we can construct the motifs “small entity” and “non-threatening entity” and logically attribute these to Alvis. As we see here the thought process is as free as the near textual approach is confined. Another example is the name of Thor in the same text, where he names himself by the secondary name Vingthor. In the near textual approach this name appears as a secondary name with no motif attached to it, but with the interpretational method we can create a motif from the uncertain translation of the name by other scholars. As we have seen Rudolf Simek makes a case for it meaning battle-Thor, but is not entirely certain of its meaning or it is correctly applied. We can, if we are so inclined deem this translation to be worthy of a motif, and we can create motifs like “warrior”, “war-god” etc. As we are not bound by the strict boundaries of the near textual approach, several avenues of expansion upon the original near textual motifs are possible.

#### 2.4.3: The interpretational process and problems of narrative culture

As we saw in the part of the thesis that concerned itself with the near textual approach to motif extraction, the process of interpretation is always present, even in the cases of very superficial motif extraction process. When we in the case of the interpretational method have to read the text in a different and deeper way, it is logical to establish some points about the process of interpreting a text. The interpretational efforts done by anyone who reads a text is done with the conscious and unconscious preconceptions of that person, we carry with us the entirety of culture and tradition with us in our minds, and routinely use this to make sense and see patterns within texts we read and phenomena we observe. So how does this impact our work in reading and interpreting a text with the intent on finding, extracting and constructing motifs?

As was evident in the near textual approach, the textual analysis done was simple and without the need for an analysis and a validation process except for the validity of the English translation. If we are to go deeper and extract associational meanings from words, sentences and implications, we do have to go to a deeper level of textual understanding. This does not mean however, that we are thoroughly restrained by an oppressive interpretational method. We are to search in the text for the universal, for the general, for the special, but how is this done when texts are in large part based upon the cultures of the authors that wrote them? This problem is an important factor to discuss. The near-textual method did not concern itself with this problem, as it was in essence just focused on the text as it stood, not on the implications of the text and the words that were written. The interpretational method does base itself more upon our understanding of the source material and the milieu in which it was written. As is often the case with hermeneutical methods and interpretation as a whole, it is a difficult task to explain the fusion of knowledge and logical interpretation, which is what we are about in this methodology. We can however argue that a great deal of the interpretation done is done without the need for an incorporation of knowledge about the society and culture in which it was written, while others are hinging upon our understanding of it. We can view the wording “unmanly” in our Norse corpus as one example of a societal and culturally specific translation. As Thor, Loki and Odin all try to avoid being associated by the term, we know it to be very important. The fact being that the Norse preferred terms for coward or weakling were all somehow connected to the idea of the effeminate and womanly, or unmanly if you will (Ström 1973: 4). By this we can see that the term unmanly, as it is used, is a direct

translation of the term as it appears in the original Norse text, as well as it is a correct motif when viewing the culture it was written in.

Another example which is more difficult of to interpret deals with Thor killing the older sister of Thrym in the *Thrymskvida*. Thrym's older sister is described with the Old Norse word "arm", which can be translated as both "poor", "old" and in the case of Bellow's translation "luckless". When Thor gets his hammer the text gives special mention to him slaying Thrym's sister, although she is by all accounts is, in addition to greedy, a wretched harmless creature who was probably unarmed. Here we meet something of a problem in that in our modern perception, this would be murder. One could argue that every jötunn slain by Thor at Thrym's wedding feast is a murder, as they are unlikely to be armed at such a festive occasion. But does this mean that it was also the case in the time which the story was written? The text itself gives us no indication of this being neither good nor bad, but does seem to imply that the sister of Thrym was given the strokes of the hammer in lieu of a bridal fee, written as such as to denote that this was seen as justice by Thor. We do have indications of violence against women being seen as abhorrent in the culture of Viking age Scandinavia, and that it gives reason to be branded as a "Niðing" as seen in several saga's. This does indicate that violence against women, which may or may not include female Jötnar, was seen as something wrong, and that this may be seen as a crime of which Thor is guilty.

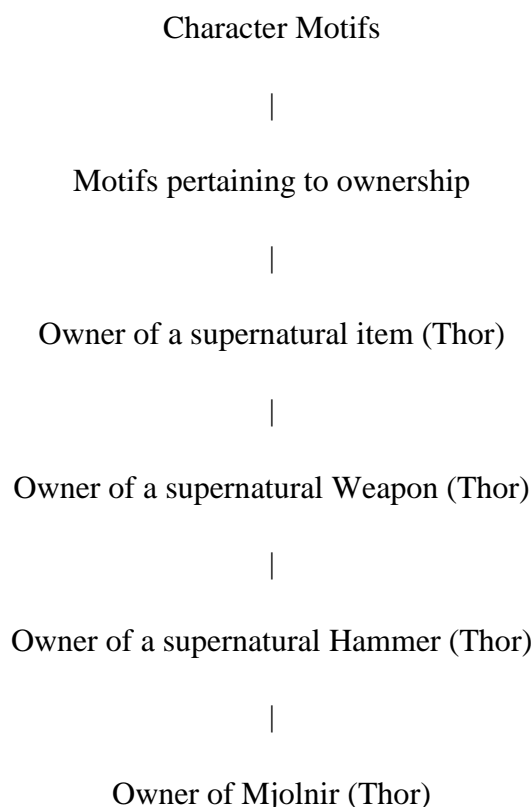
We can however say that most of the motifs we extract and construct, also with the interpretational method, does not have to be moderated much by the cultural conditions inherent in the Norse narrative, as they are universal and universally interpreted.

#### 2.4.4: Possibilities of categorization and cataloguing

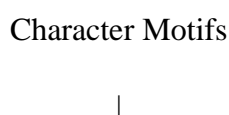
When one is free to explore the different interpretations and ways of drawing parallels and lines between different universal motifs we can establish a larger framework of cataloguing as well. Where the near textual method of motif extraction gives us a single word which we use as a motif, the interpretational process gives us something more akin to *concepts*. These concepts can be traced through several layers in what I call a "motif tree", which gives us a larger framework of comparison. If we view each motif extracted and applied to an entity as

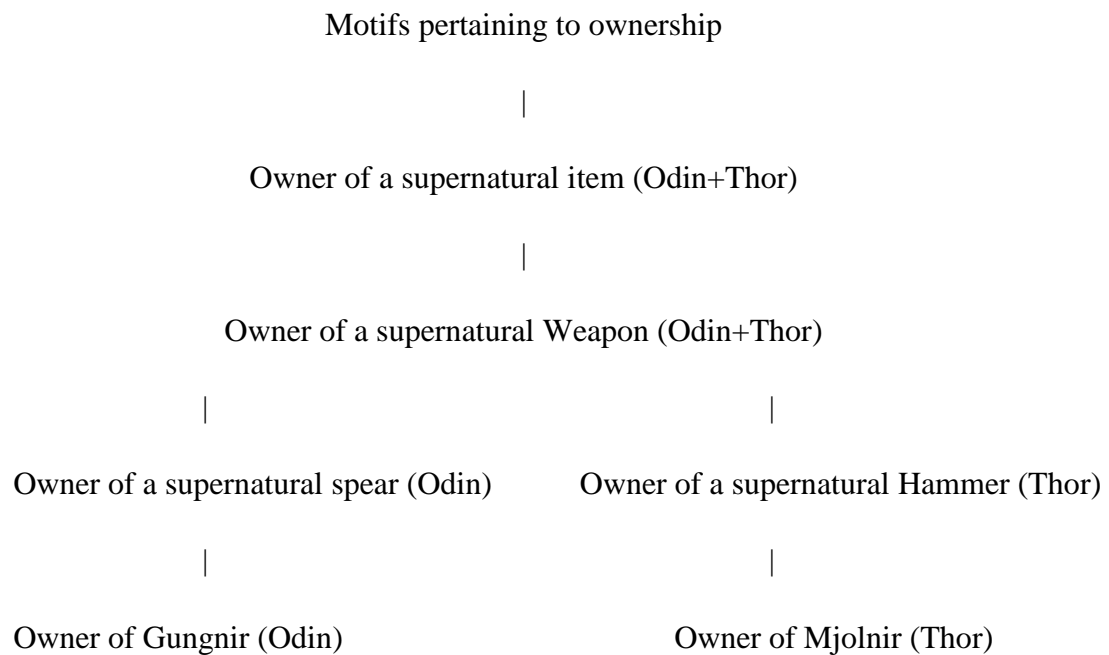
the last and most detailed motif in a chain of increasingly generalized terms we can connect these “motif trees” into a generalized structure of comparison.

As an example I can mention the hammer of Thor, Mjolnir. Thor is an owner of Mjolnir, a supernatural hammer. The supernatural hammer is itself a supernatural weapon, which is the category preceding “supernatural hammer”. If we follow the increasingly less detailed chain we get this:



Here we can see a chain of motifs that are from the third motif from the top are all motifs that can be applied to the entity that owns Mjolnir, namely Thor. With this chain we do not exclude Thor from being compared to other entities that own supernatural weapons that are not hammers, or from entities that own supernatural items that are not weapons. In a comparative process it should be able to compare two deities in the most detailed “link” or a motif chain. As we can see the two first “links” in the chain are purely for categorizing purposes, and this is to be the norm when creating these chains. This chain is as we can see, not just to be used for Thor, if we where to place Odin into the same chain, beside Thor, we would get something like this:





The comparison between the two entities Odin and Thor would then be matched by the latest shared point in the motif chain, in this case being “owner of a supernatural weapon”, as the type of weapons differ. With this method we may very well be able to compare a larger number of entities to each other by comparing them to the level of the motif chain in which they match.

The point being here that we can establish larger groups of entities and motifs by categorizing them in a system based upon simple structures.

#### 2.4.5: Motifs pertaining to characters

As the motifs found with the interpretational method of motif extraction is to be of a much greater number and variety than those found in the near-textual approach, in addition to being developed along the lines of the motif tree structure, they need a larger and more accommodating system of cataloguing than those of the near textual approach. With this in mind, here is a list of proposed categories for character motifs.

2.4.5.1: Mental motifs: This is a category of character motifs that is pertaining to a characters mental landscape and personality. I propose also a distinction between these on an axis of “permanent”, “situational”, and “acquired”. Between these we can track the development of a character in a story in, and observe the details of the characters personality and mental traits. As we can assume, a characters inhabit certain character traits as their basic personality as it is

presented in the stories from which we draw our motifs, we can assume that these are permanent features of their personality. I propose that these fall under the subcategory “mental motifs” with the note “permanent”. Does this mean that these are the same in every story from which we draw the motifs? Certainly not, the basis for the distinction is made in the interpretation of the text from which it is drawn, as what the characters personality is existing within the frame that is the story in question. This does not mean that they are permanent as in existing as a permanent character trait across all stories, although the mental image of a character as perceived across multiple text might carry that assumption, and additionally it might also have been deemed unnecessary by the writer to include these traits in the story, as many of them might well have been assumed to be “public knowledge”.

In the case of situational motifs the thoughts go more along the lines of for example moods and mental situations that occur, but that are not the default lines that a characters mentality and personality goes by. The situational mental motifs are by no means less important in the definition of a characters personality than the permanent, as they can be clear indicators of how a character deals with a certain situation, or what moods a character is prone to having. The distinction between the permanent and situational is made for the reason of tracking and dividing mental traits and motifs to show a characters thoughts and actions in light of his personality and the reactions to stimuli occurring in the story. If we are to use an example from the texts chosen as a basis for the extraction of motifs, an example of a permanent mental character motif is the wisdom of both Odin and the jötunn Vavtrudnir in “Vavtrudnismál”, as this is a trait that can be drawn from the text that it is natural to assume and interpret to be a non-changing aspect of their characters in the text. If we were to find an example of a situational mental character trait we can find several examples within the texts, but the rage of Freyja in “Thrymskvida”, where her rage causes the dwellings of the gods to shake and her necklace to burst open. As this is a reaction brought forth by external stimuli, in this case the thoughtlessness and lack of respect of Thor and Loki when assuming that she would instantly marry a jötunn for the sake of the hammer Mjolnir, and not something that is a normal part of Freyja’s character, we can place the motif “rage filled goddess” within the subcategory “mental character motif” and mark it as “situational”. This does however not mean that the situational motifs has to be something out of character or rare, as Freyja’s rage, countless stories deal with the god Thor’s mighty rage and the consequences thereof, as the god seems to be prone to fits of rage and violence. If we were to split up rage into the two categories “rage filled god” and “rage prone god”, which we will do as a thought experiment

now to illustrate the differences in great detail, the motif “rage prone god” would be a permanent mental motif, as it is a trait that is a part of Thor’s normal personality, while the motif “rage filled god” would be situational, since it is a product of and a reaction to situational stimuli. At a later stage however, we might encounter a character who has the motif “rage filled god” as a permanent mental character motif, an example of this which comes from beyond the realm of the Norse texts in which the basis for this system is created is the ancient Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, as she exists within the text pertaining to her creation by the sun god Ra. In the story Sekhmet is made to kill certain enemies of the gods, but is so bloodthirsty that none escapes her lust for blood until the gods trick her. In this story the bloodlust and rage of Sekhmet are permanent parts of her character, and only at the end does the situational motif of “drunken goddess” cancel them out. As we can see of this example there will be some overlap between the motifs that are separated into the subcategories, which will give us a new avenue to make distinctions and narrow down the search for corresponding motifs in different religious characters. With the motif “rage filled god/goddess” in both subcategories it should be possible to search among those that have the motif as both permanent and situational, and those that have the motif in one of the subcategories and not the other. The last subcategory I propose is the “acquired mental character motifs”, into which fall the motifs that a character acquires in a story. This is to indicate a development in the character and the changes made to characters mental motifs in the course of a story. This is relevant, not only when extracting motifs from the characters of religious literature, but even more relevant when dealing with the ultimate goal of this method, to compare religious characters and texts not only with themselves, but also with modern popular media and the motifs therein. This last point is made very clear with the modern notion of “character development” and “character arch” being integral to telling what is considered a good story in modern times. Although the development of a character within the confines of a story was not considered mandatory within older religious literature, it does not mean that it was rare. As many stories are about the origins of phenomena and the history of gods, the Norse mythology has several stories that deal with how a character acquired certain traits, with stories about Odin being the most relevant when dealing with mental motifs.

As examples of Mental motifs we could mention:

- Thor: Character motifs - Mental motifs –Merciless (s): Thor is utterly merciless when slaying the Jötnar, especially when killing the older sister of Thrym. The killing of a

woman was seldom seen with kind eyes in Norse society or the Norse pantheon. Thr 32.1+2

- Loki: Character motifs – mental motifs – Motifs pertaining to intelligence – Cunning (s): Loki is described in his disguise as a “wise serving maid”, deflecting Thrym’s questions. Thr 26.1+28.2
- Character motifs - Mental motifs – Motifs pertaining to Mood - Ragefilled entity (s): Freya flies into a fit of rage when Thor demands that she marry Thrym, which causes the whole building to shake and Brisingr to burst. Thr 13.1

2.4.5.2: Physical motifs: This category is self-explanatory, as it deals with the physical appearance and traits that are connected to the physical body. In this category I propose to put the genealogy and physical traits in the same category, as the genealogy suits the physical aspects of the category well. Into this category we place the motifs that are indicative of appearance, strength and physical functions and needs. Thor’s beard, strength and enormous appetite are all relevant to this category. If we were to use examples of physical motifs we could mention:

- Thor: Physical motifs – genealogy – Child of a god-class- Child of a male god – Child of Odin (p): Thor is given the moniker “son of Odin”. THR v21,s2(P)
- Tyr: Character motifs - Physical motifs – Appearance – Motifs regarding number of limbs – Motifs connected to missing limbs – One handed (P): Tyr is described in this stanza as one-handed. Lok v0.s5
- Tyr: Character motifs - Physical motifs – Appearance – Motifs regarding number of limbs – Motifs connected to missing limbs – One handed (A): This sentence recounts how Tyr lost his hand to the giant wolf Fenrir (Fenrisúlfr). Lok v0.s6

In the last two we see the illustration of the permanent and acquired motifs, as the first describes Tyr as having only one hand, while the other establishes the cause of Tyr having only one hand.

2.4.5.3: Societal motifs: In this category we can establish what authority, place and role an entity has in the mythological system of which it is part. Into this category we can put the motifs that connects entities to certain societal phenomena, to lordship or place in the



pantheon, motifs that are connected to wealth or to acts against society such as crimes. We can use this category to compare entities' standings within the same or other societies, as well as catalogue the roles they can have. Examples of motifs connected to roles:

- Thor: Character motifs - Societal motifs –Entity connected to war – Champion of the gods (p): Implied in this stanza that Thor, with the hammer Mjolnir in his possession, is the only thing that stands between the subjugation of Asgard by the Jötnar. Thr 18.2
- Thrym: Character motifs – Societal motifs - Motifs regarding leadership – Lord of entity class (p): Thrym is described as “Thursar dróttinn”, which one could translate as “lord of the Thursar”, Thursar being one of many words for the Norse Jötnar. Thr 6.1.
- Thrym: Character motifs – Societal motifs - Motifs regarding leadership – Lord of tribe within entity class (p): Lord of a class/king of a tribe: As the word Thursar is most commonly used as “hrimthursar”, i.e. frost giants or frost-jötnar, we could make the argument for Thrym being the lord of a select subcategory of the Jötnar, just as Surtr seems to be in regards to the fire-jötnar of Muspelheim. Thr 6.1.
- Thrym: Character motifs - Societal motifs –Entity guilty of criminal acts – Thief – Thief of supernatural object (s): Thrym confesses to stealing the hammer of Thor. Thr 8.1+11.1

In the first example we interpret the words of Loki to mean that Thor holds the place as guardian of Asgard against the forces of the Jötnar, making him what I call *Champion of the Gods*. In the second and third examples we see the different ways we can interpret the wording “Thursar dróttinn”, as it can be seen as both denoting the entirety of the class Jötnar, or more probably one kind or tribe within the class. The last example shows us an example of a criminal act, which we with only a modicum of knowledge about the Norse society know to be just as much of a crime in that context as in modern times.

The societal motifs can also include social situations, as the situation in *Thrymskvida* is a wedding, the ceremony would fall under the definition of a societal motif. As such there would exist a motif connected to all the named entities (including the hammer Mjolnir) that could be the following:

(Entity): Character motif – Societal motif – Ceremony or social situation – Wedding

With Thor and Thrym (as bride and groom) and the hammer Mjolnir (as a sacred object) as the main entities to whom the motif can be applied. Here we could also mention the entity Vár, to whom the wedding vows are to be made.

#### 2.4.5.4: Motifs pertaining to ownership

Another rather logical category, into which falls any entity that has an item in its possession which is mentioned in the text. Into this category falls any named supernatural items, any animals, vehicles, clothes, armors etc. It does not matter in the primary motif whether or not it has been gotten by non-honest means, as the boundary I have set here is that it has to have been in an entities possession. We could however denote the primary and “secondary” owner (thief, lender) by marking with the “situational” or “permanent” marks in the description.

Some examples of ownership motifs include:

- Thrym: Character motifs - Motifs pertaining to ownership – Owner of animals – owner of cattle (p): Thrym has great gold-horned cattle and black oxen in his stables, it is implied that these are prized and noteworthy animals, but not explicitly stated that they are supernatural in spite of their golden horns. Thr 23.1.
- Thor: Character motifs – motifs pertaining to ownership - Owner of a supernatural item - Owner of a supernatural weapon – Owner of a supernatural hammer – Owner of Mjolnir: The hammer, Mjolnir, is the hammer Thor is searching for in this stanza. Thr 1.1.
- Thor: Motifs pertaining to ownership – Owner of supernatural animals – owner of supernatural goats: The goats of Thor pull his wagon across the skies. Thr 21.1.

#### 2.4.5.5: Motifs pertaining to phenomena

As is often the case supernatural entities are often connected to different elemental phenomena. This was discussed earlier in the near-textual approach when dealing with nature substrates, but can be greatly expanded upon here as we are able to interpret the links to nature and natural phenomena with greater freedom in the interpretational approach. Where the near-textual approach could only give us vague connections to phenomena the interpretational method gives us leeway to argue for connections, mastery and personification of elemental forces, if we are able to back it up with academic sources of a consensus. We know that Thor is connected to thunder through the etymology of his name, but the word “thunder” is the only motif we can apply to the entity when using the near-textual approach.

In the interpretational approach however, we can go beyond the simple word and argue for Thor being the master of the storms, lightning and thunder, in contrast to the singular aspect as given to us in the other method. We can also argue with basis in certain interpretations of the text, but which are more in the realm of guessing, as is the case of reading into the entity Thrym mastery over the element earth, since he hid the hammer Mjólnir so far beneath the earth that no one can reach it.

#### 2.4.6: Item motifs

As certain traits and motifs can be applied to the entities that are also items, the need for this category arises. Here the case is, logically enough, that the motifs are to reflect upon the items themselves, and not necessarily upon the entities that they are connected to. This does not constitute anything other than a shift in the focus of the motifs that are already established, as the motif connected to Thor that is “owner of a magic hammer”, becomes simply “magic hammer” when attributed to the hammer Mjólnir. In my opinion though, the only item-entities that deserve their own motifs and entity pages are the ones that are either named or prevalent in a text, like the hammer Mjólnir in *Thrymskvida*, Freyja’s feather dress from the same story, or the horse that Skirnir rides in *Skirnismál*. As we can see only one of these are named with something other than a descriptive noun, but yet they are very important to the story and stand out in their own right. If we were to look at items and objects that fall outside this category we could look at the horses and hounds of Thrym, which we see when Loki first arrives in Jötunheim. These items denote something about Thrym, namely that he is rich and powerful, but they themselves play no part as anything as individual items. So in the cases of items being purely used to illustrate an aspect of a character or location, and not being used actively in the narrative of the text, the category of “item motifs” do not apply to them, as they are not considered entities.

#### 2.4.7: Locational/phenomenal motifs

This group of motifs are in the same category as the item motifs, as they are attributed to entities that are not active characters in their own right, but another type of entity. In the Norse literature there are several realms, and several phenomena that get special attention from the authors. When dealing with locations and phenomena we have a great amount of

examples in the text *Alvissmál*, where most of the text is used to give primary and secondary names to various locations and phenomena in the Norse literary landscape, with the secondary names being supplied by the different classes of entities found in Norse mythology. The grouping of locations and phenomena together like this is made purely out of a need to avoid complications when defining the different entities that fall into this wide category. If we were to look at the sea as it is described in *Alvissmál* it is described vaguely, as seen in the English translation:

English: (Alviss :) Sea men call it, gods The Smooth-Lying, The Wave is it called by the Vanir, Eel-Home the jötnar, Drink-Stuff the elves, for the dwarfs its name is The Deep.

Is this the realm of the sea-entity *Ægir*? Or is it the phenomena? The border between the realm, the phenomena and the (possible) entity (*Ægir*) is so vague that I choose to group locations/realms together with phenomena like the sea, the sun and the moon. This also balances out in the motif section of entities like *Ægir*, since it is natural that his realm is the sea, and that he is connected to the phenomena “sea”.

It is important to make the division between the character entity motifs that are connected to phenomena, and the motifs that are connected directly to phenomena, as these have their own focus. When dealing with motifs pertaining to phenomena we are dealing wholly within the realm of these phenomena being connected to character entities, or being aspects of said entities. We could mention Thor and his connections to Thor as an example, here we see that the storm is an aspect of the entity Thor, being used to define him as a character in a text, so the subject and entity is Thor while the object and motif is the phenomena. In the phenomena motifs we are dealing with motifs that are connected to the phenomena where the phenomena take the entity or subject place in the analysis.

#### 2.4.8: Some issues regarding the interpretational approach to motif extraction

As we have seen in this section of the thesis the interpretational method of motif extraction is a much more free method of extracting and constructing motifs than the near-textual approach was. The method has, in contrast to the near-textual almost no limit to the amount of motifs that can be interpreted from the texts at hand. Herein lies also the great danger of the interpretational method. As every motif made within the realm of this method is hinging upon

interpretation, there is always the danger that our interpretation or reasoning behind the motifs is flawed. How can we be ascertain whether or not Laufey, the mother of Loki, was a nature goddess simply from her name? She is connected to the nature substrate “vegetation” by way of her name, but how far can we go before we need to question the results of our motif reasoning? This problem is much more prevalent here than in the earlier, simpler near-textual approach, as we are to a larger degree generalizing and searching for the universal, instead of just publishing the specific.

Many of the motifs found with the interpretational method are logical and not in much need of verification. Examples of this can be found in both Thor and Loki having the motif tree:

(Thor/Loki): Character motifs - Physical motifs –uncharacteristic appearance – disguise (s):

Thor dresses as Freyja (Thr 19.1) and Loki dresses as a maidservant (Thr 20.2).

This motif is in my opinion a natural and logical motif that can be extracted and constructed without any degree of interpretational effort, as it is describing a simple situation in definite terms, they are performing a physical act that gives them an uncharacteristic appearance, the nature of which being them disguising themselves as women. Another example could be when dealing with Thrym having stolen the hammer, giving him this motif tree:

Thrym: Character motifs - Societal motifs –Entity guilty of criminal acts – Thief – Thief of supernatural object (s): Thrym confesses to taking and hiding the hammer of Thor.

Thr.8.1+11.1

As we can see the basis for the motif is the written text, the basis being that Thor refers to the hammer as “stolen” in Thr.2.1, and Thrym confessing that he has “hidden” it, all points to the logical conclusion that Thrym was the one who stole the hammer, and that makes him worthy of the title of “thief”.

If I am to go to the exact opposite point of the spectrum I could show some of the motifs that are constructed on more uncertain ground. These were constructed with the specific purpose of showing the various degrees of possible results of an unfettered interpretational process. If we are first to show some of the ones which lack clear definitions:

Thor: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena – Elemental motifs – Entity connected to storms/lightning/thunder – Wielder of storms/lightning/thunder: Thor is described by the name of “Hlorriði”, which is often translated as “loud rider” or “loud weather god”, in reference to Thor causing thunderstorms. Thr.7.5+14.1+31.1.

Here we can see that the translation is interpreted as an aspect of Thor that is already established. The direct translation of the word “Hlorriði” is “loud-rider” (Simek 1993: 153) or “roaring-rider” (De Vries 200: 239). The interpretation done by the translators, in this case Rudolf Simek and Jan de Vries, makes the case for this being a case of Thor riding his chariot across the skies causing thunder. This may very well be the case, as this is a valid interpretation based upon existing motifs connected to Thor, but it is by no means a certain interpretation of the name.

Another case could be the notion of Heimdallr being the “whitest áss” (hvítastr ása), which we have covered a few times in the course of this thesis. In the near textual approach we chose to keep with the direct translation and simply use the word “whitest” as a motif used about Heimdallr, while in the interpretational we can give voice to the other possibilities. We could construct the uncertain motifs like this:

- Character motifs - Physical motifs –Appearance – Pale skin: Heimdall is described as “hvítastr ása”, which directly translated is “the whitest of the Aesir” We could interpret this as him being of a pale complexion. Thr.15.1
- Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena –Elemental motifs – Entity connected to light: The term “hvítastr ása” can be interpreted as being connected to light. Thr.15.1
- Character motifs - Physical motifs –Appearance – fair hair: The term “hvítastr ása” can be interpreted to mean that he is fair-haired. Thr.15.1

As we can see all of these are uncertain since we do not know exactly what the term meant in the time in which it was written. All of these can be supported by the article “The Contemptuous Sense of the Old Norse Adjective Hvítr ‘White, Fair’ ” written by Albert M. Sturtevant, where he gives reasons for all three being valid (Sturtevant 1952: 119).

If we are to go to the far end of the spectrum into the realm of pure speculation we could consider a possible interpretation of Thrymskvida 8.1+8.2, where Thrym describes how the hammer is hidden far beyond the reach of anyone buried beneath the earth. From this we can interpret and construct this motif tree:

- Thrym: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena –Elemental motifs – Entity connected to the earth – Mastery of earth-element (s): Thrym, in confessing the theft of Thor’s hammer, describes it as being buried impossibly deep beneath the earth, beyond the reach of anyone but him, suggesting that there exists a supernatural affinity or mastery of the earth in the entity Thrym.

There exists no other mention in the Norse texts of Thrym having any mastery of the earth or other elements, and no sources to back the interpretation. Does this mean that it is wrong? I would say that it is almost guaranteed that this was not the meaning of the text, but since the interpretational method has a more free and unfettered structure the reading of the sentence is possible.

As we can see there are uncertainties even in the cases of reasoning done with the support of other scholars, how will we deal with the cases where there is a lack of supporting sources? The simple answer is that these cases cannot be verified without support from either other sources, like the writings of other scientists. What we can make the case for however, is the establishing of a consensus among researchers. Here we see the emergence of the case made for the simplicity and individuality proposed as a strength of the near-textual method, and the contrasting realization when dealing with the interpretational method.

#### 2.4.9: The need for a cooperative project structure

As a continuation of the last part I will here make the argument for the need of a larger cooperative structure for the interpretational motif method. As we have seen a completely free structure is far from practical, as it is an individual interpretational effort that creates the motifs. If we are to use this method as an effective tool we will need to have a process of validation, which will be most effectively accomplished by having a larger cooperative framework like a project, where other researchers may read, comment and discuss the motifs proposed, and finally validate or disagree with the proposals.

I will also argue for a usage of textual validation based upon the writing of other scholars, but that there in that case needs to be a number which is the bare minimum of sources to support a proposed motif. That number could range from anywhere from one and more, as is deemed necessary. That being the case the eventual project structure would need to be discussed at a later time, as this part of the thesis is wholly focused on describing the interpretational method of motif extraction.

#### 2.4.10: The strengths and weaknesses of the interpretational method

As with the near textual method the interpretational method has its share of strengths and weaknesses, which contrast to the former method. The strengths of this method are in my opinion:

1. Great yield of results: As the extraction of motifs are hinging upon the interpretational efforts and the knowledge of the interpreter, the amount of proposed motifs are only limited by the extractors own imagination. When one contrasts it to the near textual approach the freedom to construct motifs from the structure of sentences or across the sentences in a text makes it possible to create a vast amount of motifs, which was not the case in the bound form of the near textual approach.
2. The process of “streamlining” the motifs: As the construction of the motifs are to a lesser degree bound by the actual wording of the text the principles of universality and generalization are more readily applied to the found motifs. As two completely different sentences do not match in the near textual method, they might do so in the interpretational, since it is *the meaning* of the text that is paramount in this case of the interpretational reasoning. This means that it is easier to compare different motifs across the barriers of religion, language and location, since it is the universal we are looking for.

The process also has some weaknesses, as previously addressed:

1. Complexity: Where the near textual method is simplicity itself the interpretational method may very well be the complete opposite. As the motifs are constructed into overarching structures of motif trees it may prove to be very difficult to find existing motif structures within the system. It is also possible to imagine that such a large structure of a great amount of motifs, if not easily navigational by a computer structuring, can make the construction of similar and overlapping motifs a consequence of the complexity.
2. Validation: As I hopefully showed by the examples I used in this part of the thesis the spectrum of reasoning in the interpretational motifs is wide, with easily extracted motifs from simple reasoning on the one side, and great leaps of logic and associations on the other. As I argued for earlier, there needs to be a process of validating and reviewing the proposed motifs found with this method, either by sources and



interpretations found in the works of other researchers, or by a project structure built upon the foundation of discussion, argument and consensus about the motifs proposed.

#### 2.4.11: Conclusion

The interpretational method, when applied correctly can be an effective tool for extracting, constructing and cataloguing motifs. It is to a large degree the opposite of the near textual approach with a basis in a more free structure than the other method, which can yield a larger amount of universal motifs, but which needs to be validated by sources or consensus.

#### Bibliography 2.4:

Ström, Folke 1973: "Nid, Ergi and Old Norse Moral Attitudes". Published by the Viking Society for Northern Research for the University College London.

## **Part 2.5: Examples of Motifs found with the Interpretational method of motif extraction**

This section of part 2 of the thesis will we used to show some of the motifs constructed by me through the interpretational method of motif extraction described in part 2.4. As this is the work of one lone individual I would prefer it if the reader does not view these results as conclusive motifs, as they are not validated. I would rather this be read more as a list of proposed motifs from varying parts of the reasoning spectrum, which all lack the ability to be validated in the proposed manner. It is my intention to let these motifs illustrate the arduous process of the methodology, and illustrate some of the strengths and weaknesses I made the case for in 2.4.

I will present the motif chains in order of appearance in the *Thrymskvida*, which is the only text that I have subjected to this method of motif extraction. I will go through the text sentence by sentence, like the examples found in the near textual, but in the case of these I will only show the English translation of the sentence, followed by the motifs and commentaries made about the reasoning.

### *Thrymskvida* 1.1

English Sentence: Wild was Vingthor when he awoke, and when his mighty hammer he missed; He shook his beard, his hair was bristling, as the son of Jord about him sought.

#### Motifs:

- Thor: Character motifs - Societal motifs –Entity connected to violence– Wargod (s): Thor is again given the name «Vingthor» by the storyteller which is often translated as “battle god”. (Simek 1993: 364)
- Thor: Character motifs – motifs pertaining to ownership - Owner of a supernatural item - Owner of a supernatural weapon – Owner of a supernatural hammer: The hammer, Mjolnir, is the item Thor is searching for in this stanza. Backed up by the naming of the hammer in Thr.30.2. See also Thr.2.1.
- Thor: Character motifs - Physical motifs –uncharacteristic appearance - Wild appearance (s): in the stanza Thor is described as shaking his beard and hair.
- Thor: Character motifs - Physical motifs – Genealogy - Child of a god entity class – child of a female god entity class: Thor is given the moniker “son of Jord”, who is not described as adhering to any class in this text, but is described as an ásynjir in the *Gylfaginning*.
- Mjolnir: Object connected to primary entity – Object connected to entity of god-class – object connected to male god: Mjolnir is described as being owned by Thor, in

several cases being identified not by its name “Mjolnir”, but as “Thor’s hammer”. See also Thr.2.1+3.2+7.5+8.1+11.1+18.2+31.1+32.3

- Mjolnir: Item motifs - Motifs regarding object situations – Object connected to criminal acts – object connected to theft – object is the victim of theft: Mjolnir is the hammer Thor is searching for at the beginning of the story. Which has been stolen by Thrym, as is revealed later in the text. See also Thr.2.1.
- Mjolnir: Item motif - Motifs regarding object characteristics – Object is supernatural – Object is of great power: The hammer Mjolnir is described by the word “mighty” in this sentence.

#### Thrymskvida 2.1

English Sentence: Hear now the speech that first he spake: "Harken, Loki, and heed my words, nowhere on earth is it known to man, Nor in heaven above: our hammer is stolen.

##### Motifs:

- Loki: Character motifs- Societal motifs - Supernatural helper – Greater supernatural helper (s): Loki is seemingly recruited by Thor in the search for Mjolnir, although he in the story it is never explicitly stated that he agrees to help, he is Thor’s companion through the entire story.

#### Thrymskvida 3.1

English Sentence: To the dwelling fair of Freyja went they, Hear now the speech that first he spake:

##### Motifs:

- Folkvang/Sessrumnir: Locational motifs – motifs pertaining to buildings – Beautiful Home: The dwelling of Freyja, interpreted here as either her home Folkvang or the great hall Sessrumnir (both named in Snorri’s Gylfaginning), is described as “fair”.

#### Thrymskvida 3.2

English Sentence: (Thor): "Wilt thou, Freyja, thy feather-dress lend me, that so my hammer I may seek?"

##### Motifs:

- Freyja: Character motifs - Owner of a supernatural object – owner of a supernatural article of clothing – owner of a supernatural article of clothing used for supernatural travel: see next example for description.

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- Freyja: Character motifs - Owner of a supernatural object – owner of a supernatural article of clothing- owner of a supernatural article of clothing used for shapeshifting: Thor asks Freya for her legendary “Feather-dress”, which gives the owner the ability to fly. It is not specified within the text whether or not it allows the shape of the owner to change to make this possible, it does not go into any detail in regards to shape or appearance either. The wording of “fjaðrhams” may be seen as a word meaning that the user takes on the “shape” or “skin” of a feathered being.
- Freyja’s feather dress: Motifs pertaining to Object ownership - Object connected to primary entity – Object connected to entity of god-class – object connected to female goddess: The feather dress is described in 3.2 as the property of Freya.
- Freyja’s feather dress: Motifs regarding object characteristics – Object is supernatural – Object is a supernatural article of clothing: The wording “fjaðrhamr” indicates that the feather dress is an article of clothing draped over the wearer.
- Freyja’s feather dress: Motifs regarding object characteristics – Object is supernatural – Object is a supernatural article of clothing – Object is a supernatural article of clothing used for shapeshifting: Although not stated specifically in the story, the wording “fjaðrhamr” can be translated as something pertaining to a “feather-skin” or the like, it is possible that the feather dress alters the shape and form of the wearer to facilitate the process of flying.

Comment: Here we see a clear illustration of the “busy-work” involved in creating detailed entries into the motif system, shown by similar motifs being attributed to both sets of entities, characters and items.

Thrymskvida 4.1:

English sentence: Freyja: "Thine should it be though of silver bright, and I would give it though 'twere of gold."

Motifs:

- Freyja: Character motifs- Societal motifs - Supernatural helper – Lesser supernatural helper (s): Freya does not object in the slightest to Thor and Loki using her feather-dress to search for Mjolnir.

Thrymskvida 5.1:

English Sentence: Then Loki flew, and the feather-dress whirred, till he left behind him the realm of the Aesir, and reached at last the realm of the jötnar.

Motifs:

- Loki: Character motifs – Physical motifs - Travelling - Flying entity – Assisted flying: Loki flies with the help of the feather dress to the realm of the Jötnar. See also Thr.9.1.

#### Thrymskvida 6.1:

English sentence: Thrym sat on a mound, the Thursar's master, Leashes of gold he laid for his dogs, and stroked and smoothed the manes of his steeds.

Motifs:

- Thrym: Character motifs – Societal motifs - Motifs regarding leadership – Leader of entity class (p): Thrym is described as “Thursar dróttinn”, which one could translate as “lord of the Thursar”, Thursar being one of many words for the Norse Jötnar. As such this could mean that he is the Lord of all Jötnar.
- Thrym: Character motifs – Societal motifs - Motifs regarding leadership – lord of tribe within class (p): As the word Thursar is most commonly used as “hrimthursar”, i.e. frost giants or frost-jötnar, we could make the argument for Thrym being the lord of a select subcategory of the Jötnar, just as Surtr seems to be in regards to the fire-jötnar of Muspelheim. The word thurs is often used as something separate of the word Jötnar (Simek 1993: 333)
- Thrym: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena – Elemental motifs – Entity connected to the ice/frost – unknown level of mastery (p): As Thrym is described as a Thurs, and one could argue for that meaning that he was a hrimthursar, which had a strong connection to frost, ice and winter in general. Although he is not mentioned specifically as a hrimthursar, making this motif very speculative indeed.
- Thrym: Character motifs – Societal motifs – Motifs regarding wealth or the lack of – Rich entity (p): Thrym is hinted at as being wealthy in this stanza since he is not only the owner of both dogs and horses, but that his dogs have leashes made of gold.
- Thrym: Character motifs - Motifs pertaining to ownership – Owner of animals – owner of dogs: see next motif:
- +
- Thrym: Character motifs - Motifs pertaining to ownership – Owner of animals – owner of horses: Thrym is described as being the owner of dogs and horses in this stanza. There is no mention of these being supernatural or abnormal in any way.
- Thrym: Character motifs – motifs pertaining to phenomena – Elemental motifs – Entity connected to the earth: Thrym is described as being seated on a mound in this sentence.

Comment: The inclusion of the Mound which Thrym is seated upon can be interpreted in a myriad of ways, since mounds were primitive man made constructions that are thought to

have become obsolete in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Ulvestad 1954: 59). The work of discerning the possible meanings of this is a task that I have shied away from, simply because I do not have the necessary knowledge about the phenomena to even begin to guess the implications it might have.

Thrymskvida 7.5:

English Sentence: (Loki): Hast thou hidden Hlorriði's hammer?

Motifs:

- Thor: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena – Elemental motifs – Entity connected to storms/lightning/thunder – Wieler of storms/lightning/thunder: Thor is described by the name of “Hlorriði”, which is often translated as “loud rider” or “loud weather god”, in reference to Thor causing thunderstorms (Simek 1993: 153) or (De Vries 200: 239). See also Thr. 14.1+31.1.
- Mjolnir: Item motifs - Motifs regarding object connection to phenomena – Elemental object – Object connected to storm/lightning/thunder – Instrument of mastery of storm/lightning/thunder: Implied by Thor being called “Hlorriði”, translated as “storm god”, and implied by the moniker given when, and only when the hammer is mentioned in the same sentence, implying the hammer being instrumental to the secondary name.

Thrymskvida 8.1:

English sentence: (Thrym): I have hidden Hlorriði's hammer, Eight miles down deep in the earth;

Motifs:

- Thrym: Character motifs - Societal motifs –Entity guilty of criminal acts – Thief – Thief of supernatural object (s): Thrym confesses to stealing the hammer of Thor.
- Thrym: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to ownership – Owner of a supernatural object - Owner of a supernatural weapon – Owner of a supernatural hammer (a)/(s): Thrym is, however the acquisition of the hammer, the “owner” of the hammer Mjolnir, in the sense that he possesses it after the theft.
- Thrym: Character motifs – Motifs pertaining to phenomena –Elemental motifs – Entity connected to the earth – Mastery of earth-element (s): (Possible interpretation): Thrym, in confessing the theft of Thor's hammer, describes it as being buried impossibly deep beneath the earth, beyond the reach of anyone but him, suggesting

that there exists a supernatural affinity or mastery of the earth in the entity Thrym.  
(Very uncertain interpretation, for illustrational purposes)

### Thrymskvida 8.2

English Sentence: (Thrym, continued from 8.1): And back again shall no man bring it if Freyja I win not to be my wife."

### Motifs:

- Thrym: Character motifs - Societal motifs – Entity guilty of criminal acts – Hostage taker – Blackmailer (s): Thrym demands Freyja's hand in marriage as payment for returning Thor's hammer.

There exists within my research motifs from the entirety of the Thrymskvida, but still there are many more that I have not found, have not constructed from the sentences or have not even thought about. We are however not blessed with an infinite space to show all of the motifs that I have extracted either, as the story is over 31 verses long, and in this illustrative part of the thesis I have shown approximately 8 of these. This is hopefully enough to illustrate the points I made in 2.4, and show some of the many motifs that can be proposed even from a somewhat superficial analysis.

## Part 2.6

### **Closing remarks and the possible avenues of future application of the dual methods of motif extraction**

As written in part 2 I believe that the dual methods of motif extraction can become a powerful tool and comparative framework when dealing with the comparing and contrasting of religious textual entities to one another. It is my belief that the two methods complement each other both on a methodological level, and in regards to the “strengths” of the results found when applying the method. I have illustrated in detail the rich heritage taken from the studies of folklore through the ages, from the first hints of the *motif* all the way to the definition by Stith Thompson. I have drawn upon the wealth of knowledge of comparative mythology to define the usage of the term and method in our field of religious science and the history of religion.

In part two I made the case for the dual method of motif extraction, armed with the knowledge from both fields of science and with a new definition of the term Motif, more apt to our needs. The methods were explained and illustrated with examples from the Norse mythological text added to the corpus of original texts, and the strengths and weaknesses of each method was addressed. In short it is my opinion that I have created what I intended this thesis to be, a manual for further research using a practical method built upon the foundations of a theoretical framework from the science of religion and folkloristics.

#### Possible avenues for future application

I believe, as I have claimed throughout this thesis, that the application of the dual methods of motif extraction can give us significant insight into mythological entities, tales and our own reading of these. When the focus is squarely on the words in the text, as is the case with the near textual approach, we can observe what information we ourselves read into each story that is not explicitly written by the author. When dealing with the interpretational model for motif extraction we become much more aware of the associational images that accompany each motif, entity and story, and may become more skilled at observing, reading and even constructing these associative motifs and motif clusters.



The possibilities for future application of the methods when dealing with textual studies are many and easily realized. The near textual method of motif extraction is a simple method that is not inherently based on anything but the very reading and translating of a text. This makes it, as mentioned before, very simple to use. This in turn means that the threshold for participants to join in and cooperate in the project is low, making this a great possibility for future endeavor. The first steps in a groundwork for implementing texts and near textual motifs into a web based system is already done in the Motif Library of Norse Mythology on the Bibliotheca Polyglotta, and with the same basis other texts from other religions may be added and the method applied to them just as easily.

The interpretational method is a much more complicated structure however, and is not fit to yet be implemented without further backing and a larger project structure as mentioned in the description of the method. This method does however have more possibilities linked to it than the narrower near textual method. As the interpretational method is not hinging upon the wording it can be applied to other forms of art and media as well, with its own specialized method of course. There could be devised a method of extracting these motifs from paintings, from carvings in rock etc. and these examples are only the earlier examples, what if we were to compare the entity Thor as he appears in the Norse religion to the superhero Thor as he appears in the Marvel universe of comic books and movies? The comparison of these two entities, one ancient and one modern, but in essence “the same character”, would be interesting indeed.

I believe that there is much to be found and discussed if we were to use the motif extraction methods as universal tools for extracting, constructing and comparing different entities across time, space and different forms of media.